



THE YETI

THE ABOMINABLE
SNOWMAN



THE YETI IN POPULAR CULTURE

DURING A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD in the summer of 1973—through Africa, India, Thailand, China, and Japan—my college roommate and I stopped in Kathmandu, Nepal. We visited many of the usual tourist sites, including Buddhist temples and stupas and Lamaist monasteries. We attended a religious ceremony during which villagers slashed the throat of a sacrificial goat right before our eyes, and we drove to a spot where (when the clouds finally cleared) we could see the summit of Mount Everest. But as we walked through the open-air markets in several parts of the Nepalese capital, what was most surprising was the huge number of items for sale that were related to the Yeti, the mysterious ape-like creature that is native to the Himalayas. We saw casts of alleged Yeti footprints, supposed Yeti fur, and images of the Yeti on almost every item imaginable. Just like Nessie and Champ, the Yeti is big business, attracting many free-spending tourists to Nepal and bringing expeditions of cryptozoologists determined to find it. There is a five-star hotel in Kathmandu called the Yak & Yeti, as well as the Yeti Bar, and the official airline of Nepal is known as Yeti Airlines. Simon Welfare and John Fairley write that the Yeti “is tangled in a web of fantasy, religion, legend, chicanery, and commercialism. The Yeti is a highly commercial legend, perhaps even Nepal’s principal foreign currency earner.”¹

The Yeti has become one of the most enduring figures of legend. It has been mentioned by a wide variety of mountaineers who have scaled the highest mountains of the world. Because of its alleged existence in an exotic world largely inaccessible to most Westerners, it has been tied to the myth of Shangri-la as well. As Brian Regal wrote, “Big and hairy, the Yeti lived in a remote part of the world, the locals feared it, and it reportedly behaved like, well, a monster. It conveniently occupied a space, both temporally and physically, at the crossroads of the worlds of East and West, and so it took place alongside other oriental ‘mysteries.’”²

The Yeti (often misnamed the Abominable Snowman) has been the star of numerous movies, starting with *The Snow Creature* (1954), which was filmed and released only a year or two after the first widespread reports of the Yeti in popular culture, and continuing with *The Abominable Snowman* (1957) and *Snowbeast* (1977); makes a cameo appearance, voiced by John Ratzenberger, in *Monsters, Inc.* (2001); and fights Chinese soldiers in *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008). It has appeared in some form in dozens

of television shows, including Bumble, the Abominable Snow Monster, in the stop-motion animated Christmas classic *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1964); in episodes of *Looney Tunes*, *Spiderman*, *Electric Company*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Duck Tales*, *Jonny Quest*, *Doctor Who*, *Power Rangers*, *Tintin*, and even the preschool cartoon *Backyardigans*; and in numerous “monster documentaries” on cable channels. In literature, the Yeti appears not only in *Tintin in Tibet* (1960) by Hergé (Georges Remi), but also in *The Abominable Snowman of Pasadena* (1995), the thirty-eighth book in R. L. Stine’s Goosebumps series, and in Marvel comics, among others. There are even audio-animatronic Yetis in the Matterhorn Bobsled ride in Disneyland in California, and in the Expedition Everest ride at Walt Disney World in Florida. Several rock songs refer to it, and a rock band is named Yeti.

The legend is now so widespread in popular culture that most portrayals of the creature bear no resemblance to those in the original accounts reported by explorers in the Himalayas. Thanks to the “Abominable Snowman” label, most pop-culture depictions envision the Yeti as a tall bipedal white-furred beast, not the dark-furred, gorilla-like or bear-like creature that inhabits the legends of the cultures of the Himalayas.

THE MONSTER OF THE MOUNTAINS

What do we know of this mysterious creature that allegedly haunts the world’s highest mountains? There is the confusion due to the numerous names that have become associated with the Yeti legend, with multiple names not only among languages and cultures, but also within each language (and, indeed, multiple or contested meanings for many of those words—not to mention a variety of spellings). Author and mountaineer Reinhold Messner has listed and attempted to define many of these terms: *Yeti* is the mispronunciation of the Sherpa name for the creature, *Yeh-teh* (animal of rocky places), or, possibly, a derivation of *Meh-teh* (man-bear). Tibetans also call it *Dzu-teh* (cattle bear), also a name for the Himalayan brown bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*), which can walk on its hind legs, or *Mi-go* (wild man). Messner found that the Tibetan word *chemo* or *dremo* is most commonly used for both the Yeti and the Himalayan brown bear. In the different Chinese dialects, it is *beshong* or *bai xiong* (white bear), probably the giant panda; *mashiung* or *ma xiong* (brown bear); and *renshung* or *ren xiong* (man-bear).³ The wide spectrum of names for the creature reflects the facts that the cryptozoological legend is an amalgam

of many different cultural traditions and legends, and that (as Messner discovered) there is much confusion between the legendary *chemo* and the rare Himalayan brown bear.

The odd and inappropriate name Abominable Snowman originally derived from the Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, sponsored by the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society and led by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Howard-Bury in 1921. This was one of the first groups to scout a route for an attempt to climb Mount Everest. Ascending past 20,000 feet of elevation, Howard-Bury and his team were surprised to find tracks in the snow. "We were able to pick out tracks of hares and foxes," he wrote, "but one that at first looked like a human foot puzzled us considerably."⁴ He soon realized that "these tracks, which caused so much comment, were probably caused by a large 'loping' grey wolf, which in the soft snow formed double tracks rather like those of a barefooted man"—that is, a wolf that had placed its back paws in the depressions that had been made by its front paws.⁵ However, his Sherpa guides "at once jumped to the conclusion"⁶ that this "was the track of a wild, hairy man, and that these men were occasionally to be found in the wildest and most inaccessible mountains."⁷ Howard-Bury was scornful of this interpretation. "Tibet, however, is not the only country where there exists a 'bogey man,'" he wrote. "In Tibet he takes the form of a hairy man who lives in the snows, and little Tibetan children who are naughty and disobedient are frightened by wonderful fairy tales that are told about him. To escape from him they must run down the hill, as then his long hair falls over his eyes and he is unable to see them. Many other such tales have they with which to strike terror into the hearts of bad boys and girls."⁸

Be that as it may, the "wild man" idea was newspaper gold. Journalist Henry Newman interviewed both the expedition members and the porters when they returned to Darjeeling, India. The Europeans rather boringly agreed that the tracks were "unquestionably made in the snow by some four-legged creature about the size of a wolf," so Newman delightedly recounted the porters' more colorful tales of what they called *Metoh Kangmi*—a term, he wrote, that "as far as I could make out, means 'abominable snow men.'"⁹ Looking back on this fateful translation, Newman described himself as "the showman responsible for the introduction of the 'Abominable Snowman' to the world of literature and art" and described how the name came to be:

I fell into conversation with some of the porters, and to my surprise and delight another Tibetan, who was present, gave me a full description of the wild men—how

their feet were turned backward to enable them to climb easily and how their hair was so long and matted that, when going downhill, it fell over their eyes. . . . When I asked him what name was applied to these men, he said “Metoh Kangmi.” *Kangmi* means “snow-men” and the word *metoh* I translated as “abominable.” The whole story seemed a joyous creation, so I sent it to one or two newspapers. It was seized upon. . . . Later, I was told by a Tibetan expert that I had not quite got the force of the word *metoh*. It did not mean “abominable” quite so much as “filthy” and “disgusting,” somebody dressed in rags. There is an Urdu word, *dalkaposh*, meaning somebody wearing filthy and tattered clothing. The Tibetan word means something like that, but is much more emphatic.¹⁰

Based on that meaning, Newman believed that the wild-men myth was based on actual human beings: bandits and ascetics who live in the wilderness regions. It is important to note once again, however, that stories about Yeti-like creatures extend throughout the Himalayas and beyond, leading to a very large number of terms in different languages, most with multiple or contested meanings.¹¹ The interpretation of *Metoh Kangmi* is no exception. In 1956, zoologist William L. Straus Jr. described an alternative interpretation of *Metoh Kangmi* that had recently been put forward by Indian religious leader Srimat Swami Pranavananda: “*Mi-te*, which has been translated by some Himalayan expeditionists as ‘abominable, filthy, disgusting to a repulsive degree, dirty,’ actually means ‘man-bear.’ *Kangmi*, or ‘snowman,’ is merely an alternate word for the same animal. Hence the term *miteh-kangmi*, from whence ‘abominable snowman’ represents an incorrect combination, owing to mistranslation, of two terms that are essentially synonymous.”¹² Based on this translation, Straus argued that the creature was “no other than the Himalayan red bear.”

Whatever the origin of the name, Newman’s newspaper account christened a cryptid, with Abominable Snowman becoming the most common appellation for the creature in the English language. As Regal puts it, “This striking name caught people’s attention, and, more than any of the sightings or stories to this point, made the creature a topic of interest outside the Himalayas. With this catchy but inaccurate label, the creature went from being a quaint local legend to an international phenomenon. The same type of makeover and jump to celebrity status occurred later in the century, when Sasquatch became Bigfoot.”¹³

THE LEGEND GROWS

The first known sighting of a Yeti-like creature to be recorded in the region by a Westerner appeared more than 180 years ago in a paper by Brian Hodgson, an Englishman living in Nepal. A classic gentleman-explorer typical of the British Empire at that time, Hodgson was not only a diplomat, a biologist, and an administrator, but also an adventurer. He was the first Englishman permitted to visit the Nepalese royal court and the first Westerner to record in detail the traditions of Nepalese Buddhism and other cultural traditions. He wrote more than 300 scientific papers about his discoveries in the Himalayas. In one of them, published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1832, Hodgson wrote, "My shooters were once alarmed in the Kachár by the apparition of a 'wild man,' possibly an ourang, but I doubt their accuracy. They mistook the creature for a cacodemon or rakshas [mythological humanoid beings], and fled from it instead of shooting it. It moved, they said, erectly: was covered with long dark hair, and had no tail."¹⁴ As anthropologist John Napier reports, "Hodgson was somewhat scornful that his hunters had run away in terror from the creature instead of standing their ground and shooting it dead like a true British sportsman. Had they done so perhaps this book would never have needed to be written!"¹⁵

In 1889, the first report of Yeti footprints (high in the Himalayas in what is now Sikkim) appeared in what Ivan Sanderson described (amusingly, as it is pretty clear that Sanderson had not read it)¹⁶ as "a somewhat uninspired and uninspiring book about it, uninspiringly named *Among the Himalayas*" by Laurence A. Waddell, a soldier, lawyer, and historian:

Some large footprints in the snow led across our track, and away up to higher peaks. These are alleged to be the trail of the hairy wild men who are believed to live amongst the eternal snows, along with the mythical white lions, whose roar is reputed to be heard during storms. The belief in these creatures is universal among Tibetans. None, however, of the many Tibetans I have interrogated on this subject could ever give me an authentic case. On the most superficial investigation it always resolved itself into something that somebody heard tell of. These so-called hairy wild men are evidently the great yellow snow-bear (*Ursus isabellinus*), which is highly carnivorous, and often kills yaks. Yet, although most of the Tibetans know this bear sufficiently to give it a wide berth, they live in such an atmosphere of superstition that they are always ready to find extraordinary and supernatural explanations of uncommon events.¹⁷

As Napier points out, "The willingness of the Sherpas to assure travelers that tracks of *any* description discovered in the snow are those of the Yeti is a recurrent theme in the literature on the subject. Such conning appears to be quite without malice aforethought and probably reflects the extreme politeness of the Sherpas, who regard it as excessively bad-mannered to disappoint anyone. In addition, as many authorities have reported, the Sherpas possess an element of mischievousness and love a good story."¹⁸

Mischievousness aside, the specific identification of bears as "wild men" was documented by other early authors. United States ambassador William Woodville Rockhill described this encounter in 1891:

One evening, a Mongol told me of a journey he had once made to the lakes in company of a Chinese trader who wished to buy rhubarb from the Tibetans that annually visit their shores. They had seen innumerable herds of wild yak, wild asses, antelopes, and *gérésun bamburshé*. This expression means literally "wild men"; and the speaker insisted that such they were, covered with long hair, standing erect, and making tracks like men's, but he did not believe they could speak. Then, taking a ball of tsamba he modeled a *gérésun bamburshé*, which was a very good likeness of a bear. To make the identification perfect, he said that the Chinaman cried out, when he saw one, "*Hsiung, hsiung*," "Bear, bear"; in Tibetan, he added, it is called *dré-mon*. The Mongols do not class the bear among ordinary animals; he is to them "the missing link," partaking of man in his appearance, but of beasts in his appetites. The bear takes the place of the "king of beasts" among them and the Tibetans, for they hold him the most terrible of animals when attacked, and a confirmed man-eater!¹⁹

In the early twentieth century, numerous expeditions to the Himalayas were mounted by explorers and big-game hunters, including Major C. H. Shockley, Colonel Gerald Burrard, and Colonel A. E. Ward.²⁰ These three men wrote books about their explorations, in which they detailed reports of animal sightings. They described (and shot) many known and previously unknown Himalayan animals, but

never once did they give a hint of a Yeti—a suspicious track or an ominous footprint. This negative evidence is important, for these men were expert big-game hunters and were accompanied by experienced *shikaris* and would assuredly have been keeping a sharp lookout for strange animals or for an unusual spoor. Perhaps they were traveling in the wrong area; perhaps their peregrinations were at too low an altitude; perhaps, being soldiers and government officials and anxious to preserve

the respect of their colleagues down on the plains, they saw but said nothing. Or, again, perhaps there was nothing to see.²¹

After the Everest Reconnaissance Expedition, which led to the misnomer Abominable Snowman, the next significant mention of the Yeti was in 1925 by the British-Greek explorer and photographer N. A. Tombazi. Hiking at about 15,000 feet, on an expedition for the Royal Geographical Society, he saw a creature more than 200 to 300 yards away near Zemu Glacier:

Unquestionably, the figure in outline was exactly like a human being, walking upright and stopping occasionally to pull at some dwarf rhododendron bushes. It showed up dark against the snow, and as far as I could make out, wore no clothes. Within the next minute or so it had moved into some thick scrub and was lost to view.

Such a fleeting glimpse, unfortunately, did not allow me to set up the telephoto camera, or even to fix the object carefully with the binoculars; but a couple of hours later, during the descent, I purposely made a detour so as to pass the place where the “man” or “beast” had been seen. I examined the footprints, which were clearly visible on the surface of the snow. They were similar in shape to those of a man, but only six to seven inches long by four inches wide at the broadest part of the foot. The marks of five distinct toes and the instep were perfectly clear, but the trace of the heel was indistinct, and the little that could be seen of it appeared to narrow down to a point. I counted fifteen such footprints at regular intervals ranging from one-and-a-half to two feet. The prints were undoubtedly of a biped, the order of the spoor having no characteristics whatever of any imaginable quadruped. Dense rhododendron scrub prevented any further investigations as to the direction of the footprints.²²

Tombazi later said that he did not believe it was a Yeti after all, but probably a Hindu hermit who lived in isolation in the local mountain caves.²³ Although it seems to be possible for at least some acclimatized people to go barefoot in the snow at high elevations for long periods,²⁴ the measurement of the footprints as only 6 to 7 inches long but 4 inches wide is, as Napier points out, not typical of that of a human footprint. It is, however, the right proportions for a bear paw print. The prints had narrow heels, which is also a bear-like feature. Human footprints are broad in the back because the heel supports the body weight each time a human foot strides and steps. As Napier concludes, Tombazi’s description is inconsistent: the creature’s bipedal motion is hu-

man-like, but it left bear-like prints.²⁵ Either it was an unknown bipedal creature with bear-like feet, or it was just a walking bear and Tombazi's "fleeting" glimpse of the creature is distorted (as memories often are).

Additional accounts from the different Himalayan climbing and surveying expeditions occurred through the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, although none made much of an impact on Western consciousness until the name Abominable Snowman emerged as a grotesque label for the creature.

THE NAZI AND THE SNOWMAN

Brooke Dolan II, the son of a wealthy Philadelphia industrialist, led two expeditions to China and the Himalayas in the 1930s. In 1938, the German biologist Ernst Schäfer wrote a popular account of his second (1934–1936) expedition under Dolan.²⁶ Schäfer was attached to these American-funded surveys as a scientist, and he made numerous observations on the natural history of Tibet, including some of the first records of the giant panda (he was apparently "the second white man to shoot a panda"),²⁷ the Himalayan brown bear, and other wildlife. He also reported contemptuously on lore and traces of the Yeti in the region. "For the rest of his life Schäfer would poke fun at believers in the apemen of the Himalayas," explained author and documentarian Christopher Hale. "In 1938 he became exasperated as day and night his men fearfully discussed Migyuds [ape-man god of Buddhist mythology, associated with the Yeti], and he took to playing tricks on them by faking its footprints in the snow."²⁸ Rather than being some sort of mythological beast, Schäfer concluded, the Yeti was actually the Himalayan brown bear (figure. 3.1). He described an adventure that cinched it for him and shared the opinion of his assistant Wang:

On the morning of the second day, a wild-looking Wata with a rascally face comes to me and tells the fantastic story of a snowman that haunts the tall mountains. This is the same mythical creature about which Himalaya explorers always like to write because it envelops the unconquered peaks of the mountain chains with the nimbus of mystery. It is supposed to be as tall as a yak, hairy like a bear, and walk on two legs like a man, but its soles are said to point backward so that one can never track its trail. At night it is supposed to roam, descend deep into the valleys, devastate the livestock of the native people, and tear apart men whom it then carries up to its mountain home near the glaciers. After I listen calmly to this bloody tale, I convey to the Wata that he does not have to make up such a tall tale; however, if he



Figure 3.1 Himalayan brown bear mother and cub, photographed in the district of Kargil in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, India. (© 2013 Aishwarya Maheshwari/WWF-India)

could bring me to the cave of such a “snowman,” and if the monster is actually in its lair, then the empty tin can in my tent, which appears to be the object of his great pleasure, would be his reward. But should he have lied to his lord, added Wang, he could expect a beating with the riding crop. Smiling, with many bows, the lad bids his leave with the promise to return early the next morning and report to me. Wang is also of the opinion that there are snowmen and draws for me the face of the mystery animal in the darkest colors, just like he has heard about it from the elders of his native tribe countless times: Devils and evil spirits wreak havoc up there day and night in order to kill men.²⁹

“But Wang,” Schäfer scoffed, “how can you as my senior companion believe in such fairy tales?” Wang explained that these forces were manifest all around them. After all, “the same evil demons already tried to menace us many times as we traverse the wild steppes. They also sent us the violent snowstorms that fell on our weak little group like supernatural forces and at night wanted to rip apart our tents with crude fists as if they had rotten canvas before them.” Schäfer insisted “that this snowman is nothing other than a bear, perhaps a ‘Mashinnng,’ a really large one; but with our ‘big gun,’ I will easily shoot him dead before he even leaves the cave!”

The Wata returned within the day with a witness who had, while searching for lost sheep, found a cave in which “he beheld for the first time with his own eyes the yellow head of a snowman.” Following his guides to the den of the Yeti, Schäfer shot it at point-blank range when it emerged, roaring angrily, from its nap—and it was indeed a Himalayan brown bear. He later described the Abominable Snowman idea as a “sham,” saying that he “established the yeti’s real identity with the pictures and pelts of my Tibetan bears,”³⁰ some of which he shot and sent back to American and European museums.

Schäfer even alleged that in 1938, mountaineers and important Yeti trackfinders “[Frank] Smythe and [Eric] Shipton came to me on their knees, begging me not to publish my findings in the English-speaking press. The secret had to be kept at all costs—‘Or else the press won’t give us the money for our next Everest expedition.’”³¹ If true, this claim, made in 1991, would be extremely damning. If Shipton had been engaged in hoaxing or playing along with a popular legend in the 1930s, that would reflect badly on his famous footprint find in 1951—a print that remains the Yeti’s most powerful icon, but that has (as we will see) recently been implicated as a hoax. It happens that Shipton did indeed report other Yeti tracks in 1936—footprints that predate the publication of Schäfer’s book.³² In 1937, likewise, Smythe found “the imprints of a huge foot apparently of a biped and in stride closely resembling my own tracks.” Smythe was able to follow these tracks all the way to the creature’s cave lair. The problem for Schäfer’s claim that Smythe and Shipton begged him to stay silent (apart from being uncorroborated and reported decades after the fact) is that in 1938 Smythe had no need to fear that Schäfer would reveal that the Yeti is really a bear: Smythe already had publicly debunked his own well-documented Yeti tracks as those of a bear, declaring that “a superstition of the Himalayas is now explained” as being based on bears.³³ Still, Schäfer’s allegation should not be ruled out in Shipton’s case. In 1937, Shipton’s climbing partner H. W. Tilman responded to an article on the Yeti written by Smythe with a tongue-in-cheek letter of denunciation (or, rather, two letters, one prankishly penned under his nickname, Balu [Bear]):³⁴ “Mr. Smythe’s article, if it was an attempt to abolish that venerable institution the ‘Yeti,’ was hardly worth the paper on which it was written.”³⁵ Tilman’s comments about the Yeti were, throughout his career, filled with playful, cheeky jokes—with “unbecoming levity,” as one author put it.³⁶ “Admittedly difficult though it is, the confounding of scientific skeptics is always desirable, and I commend [track witness] Wing Commander [E. B.] Beauman’s suggestion

that an expedition should be sent out,” becomes a telling comment in that humorous context—as does, perhaps, Tilman’s claim to have found mysterious tracks himself in 1937: “I was crossing the Bireh Ganga glacier when we came upon tracks made in crisp snow which resembled nothing so much as those of an elephant. I have followed elephant spoor often and could have sworn we were following one then, but for the comparative scarcity of those beasts in the Central Himalaya.”³⁷ It is tempting to speculate that Shipton and Tilman (rather than Smythe) truly could have encouraged Schäfer to play along with all the Yeti fun. After all, as Ralph Izzard found when he interviewed Tilman, “It was obvious that he also belongs to the school which considers that the mystery of the Yeti should be left uninvestigated; that once the unknown becomes known and the glamour is dispelled, the interest evaporated.”³⁸

Be that as it may, the important zoological work that Schäfer had done on his Himalayan expeditions was besmirched by a much more serious matter: his joining Adolf Hitler’s Schutzstaffel (SS; Protective Squadron) in 1933.³⁹ Asserting that “science only grows on a racial basis,” Schäfer described the values of science and the values of the SS as one.⁴⁰ Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, used Schäfer’s expertise in Tibet to plan Operation Tibet, a secret Nazi mission to incite the local Tibetans and Nepalese to rise up against the British troops in the region. In addition, Hitler and Himmler had strange notions that the ancestral Aryan race had originated in the mountains of Tibet, and they sent Schäfer there to find evidence in support of their bizarre genealogy. He was not successful, and his association with Hitler and Himmler completely overshadowed his scientific reputation after the war, so almost all of his solid prewar scientific work on the natural history of Tibet was forgotten. So, too, were his sober descriptions of the Yeti’s legends and traces, and his evidence that the footprints had been made by Himalayan brown bears was discounted or forgotten until Reinhold Messner translated them and revived the idea in connection with his own quest for the Yeti.⁴¹

THE STAMPEDE TO THE HIMALAYAS

World War II slowed down the exploration of the Himalayas for a while because most men were engaged in the war effort, and Central Asia was part of the battleground between the Allies and the Japanese. Not until the late 1940s and early 1950s did the pace of exploration and the search for the Yeti pick up again. Two reports are of note. In 1948, three army officers who were



Figure 3.2

A species of langur monkey.

headed to Kolahoi Glacier in Kashmir had reached the snowline at 13,000 feet when they saw a large primate bounding toward them. At first, they thought that it might be the Yeti, but at closer range it turned out to be a large langur monkey (perhaps *Semnopithecus schistaceus* or *Semnopithecus entellus*), which can weigh nearly 50 pounds and walk bipedally for long distances (figure 3.2). Shortly thereafter, two Scandinavian prospectors reported large langur monkeys at 13,000 feet. The monkeys apparently attacked them and left large footprints in the snow⁴² (though some sources doubt their story).⁴³

The 1950s were the golden age of Yeti hunting, when, as John Napier suggests, “folklore started to deteriorate into fakelore” and there was a stampede to hunt for evidence of the Yeti. The Nepalese government offered special licenses at £400 per Yeti as an inducement to hunters.⁴⁴ The crucial event occurred during the Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition of 1951, led by Eric Shipton. The explorers were scouting a route to the top of Mount Everest (which still had not been climbed) and had split into three parties. While Edmund Hillary and another expedition member scouted one area, and two other climbers explored another, Shipton, team doctor Michael Ward, and Sherpa San Tenzing crossed a glacier at 18,000 feet.⁴⁵ There they found footprints in the snow—and, for once, someone took photographs. In doing so, they made history, for the Shipton print remains the single most famous and most persuasive piece of evidence for the Yeti. Like the film footage of Bigfoot shot by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin, it echoes hauntingly throughout the literature. As Napier put it, “Something must have made the Shipton footprint. Like Mount Everest, it is there, and needs explaining. I only wish I could solve the puzzle; it would help me sleep better at night.”⁴⁶ But Shipton and Ward may not have anticipated how famous this print would become. By Shipton’s own account, few of the tracks seemed impressive. “The tracks

were mostly distorted by melting into oval impressions,” he said, “slightly longer and a good deal broader than those made by our large mountain boots.”⁴⁷ Elsewhere, Shipton elaborated:

As we went down the glacier, however, the snow became less deep and the footprints more regularly shaped. At length we came to places, particularly near crevasses, where the snow covering the glacier ice was less than an inch thick. Here we found specimens of the footprints so sharply defined that they could hardly have been clearer had they been carefully made in wax. We could tell both by comparing one print against another and by the sharpness of the outline there had been no distortion by melting, and from this we inferred that the creatures (for there had evidently been two) had passed only a very few hours before. They were going down the glacier. The footprints were 12 inches long and about 6 inches wide. There was a big, rounded toe, projecting very much to the side; the middle toe was well separated from this, while three small toes were grouped close together. There were several places where the creatures had jumped over small crevasses and where we could see clearly that they had dug their toes into the snow on the other side to prevent their feet from slipping back.⁴⁸

Shipton photographed what he and Ward took to be the clearest, least-distorted track (figure 3.3), but seems not to have taken pictures of any of the other “Yeti” prints, which would have helped determine the significance of the photographs he did shoot.

Or did he? Since the late 1980s, a school of thought has grown that Shipton may have intentionally faked his famous track, and that argument hinges on discrepancies in the accounts about how many photographs were taken.⁴⁹ Some cryptozoological sources claim that Shipton shot not only two close-up photographs of the famous footprint (one with an ice ax for scale, and the other with Ward’s boot), but also two wider shots showing the same Yeti trackway trailing off to a moraine.⁵⁰ The problem is that the tracks in the wider shots do not match the footprint in the close-ups. When Napier asked Ward about this, Ward told him that the wider photograph was frequently misidentified, as an accidental result of having been kept in the same photo file as the shots of the “Yeti” footprint. According to Ward, that second trackway—probably from a goat—was photographed separately, earlier on the same day, and had nothing at all to do with the “Yeti” footprint photos. When Shipton confirmed Ward’s two-trackway story, Napier felt that this explanation “clears up an eighteen-year-old mystery”—but it did not *stay* clear. Writing two decades later as the



Figure 3.3

An alleged Yeti footprint photographed by Eric Shipton in 1951, on a glacier of the Menlung Basin (near the border of Nepal and China). (Reproduced by permission of Royal Geographical Society [with IBG], London)

only surviving witness of the photographing of the famous Yeti print,⁵¹ Ward spoke of

a whole series of footprints in the snow. These seemed to be of two varieties, one rather indistinct leading to the surrounding snowfields, while the other had in places a markedly individual imprint etched in the two- to four-inch snow covering on the top of hard *névé*. We had no means of measuring these, so Shipton took four photographs, two of the indistinct prints with myself, my footprints and rucksack as comparison; the other two photos were of one of the most distinct and detailed prints, one with my ice axe and one with my booted foot for scale.⁵²

Is “a whole series of footprints . . . of two varieties” one trail or two trails? Most early accounts seem to describe only a single set of tracks, while later versions (and later interpretations of the older records) either suggest two sets or one—or are ambiguous. The records and memories on this point are as conflicting as the comparison between the prints in the wide shots versus the print in the close-ups. As team member Hillary later reflected, “I was not aware of any second set of tracks.”⁵³

Whatever these photographs truly depict, the shot of the footprint compared with the ice ax was soon celebrated and debated in newspapers around the world, popular magazines, and even leading scientific journals⁵⁴—and soon a rush of people were trying to mount expeditions to find more evidence

of the Yeti. “The discovery of these footprints in 1951 stimulated great interest in the yeti,” Ward recalled, “and, as a result, many expeditions of greatly varying degrees of competence have taken place in the Himalaya and Central Asia.”⁵⁵

But could the shot have been a hoax or prank perpetrated by Shipton and Ward? That was the suspicion of investigative journalist Peter Gillman, who found it “particularly striking” that the two-trackway story, in his opinion, “contradicted all previous accounts.”⁵⁶ Potentially more damaging, Gillman noted that rare uncropped versions of the close-up photo with the ice ax may show part of a *second* footprint that seems to lack the distinctive features of the “main” footprint:

Unlike the full footprint above it, it had only vague impressions of the smaller toes; and where you would expect a big toe to match the one in the main footprint, there was nothing at all. It was after pondering all the evasions and inconsistencies that we concluded that the most obvious explanation for the unique and anomalous single footprint was that it had been fabricated by Shipton. It would have been the work of moments to enhance one of the oval footprints by adding the “toe-prints” by hand, particularly a hand wearing a woollen glove.⁵⁷

For his part, Ward denied that there was a hoax of any kind,⁵⁸ but Gillman suggested that Ward need not have known. “Under my scenario, this is what could have happened,” Gillman speculates. “When Shipton and Ward came upon the line of prints, Shipton—unknown to Ward—added the crucial embellishments to the single footprint. He called Ward’s attention to it, and joined in speculation that they had found evidence of the yeti.”⁵⁹ The largely circumstantial case for a hoax then rests on Shipton’s personality. Was he a prankster? Gillman cited examples uncovered by mountaineering writer Audrey Salkeld showing that Shipton sometimes indulged “in jokes of exactly this kind,” making up far-fetched stories about other mountaineers—stories flatly denied by others who were there.⁶⁰ (Shipton apparently claimed that climber and geologist Noel Odell once tried to eat rocks in the mistaken belief that they were sandwiches and asserted that the body of climber Maurice Wilson had been found in possession of an incriminating “sex diary” and several items of women’s clothing.)⁶¹ Hillary found that his teammate Shipton was evasive when quizzed about the footprint and that he “tended to rather dodge giving too much of a reply.”⁶² Hillary told Gillman that Shipton “definitely liked to take the mickey out of people,” and agreed that “he might have

tidied it [the footprint] up, made it look fresh and new and photographed it.” But would Shipton have let the hype get so out of hand for so long? Yes, thought Hillary, “he would think that was quite a good joke.”⁶³

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

Ever since the photograph of the footprint taken by Eric Shipton (see figure 3.3) became famous, the strongest line of evidence for the existence of the Yeti has been footprints in snow and ice. The Shipton prints *appear to resemble* gigantic human footprints, which has convinced many cryptozoologists and Yeti believers that they were made by a Yeti. But is the track evidence as compelling as cryptozoologists believe? Collectively, there are problems of consistency from one alleged trackway to another. Assessing this evidence in 1973, John Napier concluded that “so-called Yeti footprints” are collectively “useless in proving the existence of a Himalayan Bigfoot,” but “do at least offer some hints of the origins of the tale. Unlike the Sasquatch, there is little uniformity of pattern, and what uniformity there is incriminates the bear.”*

Trackways can also be deceiving on a case-by-case basis. “Most of the prints have been seen by mountaineers, the majority of whom are laymen,” warned Ward, co-discoverer with Shipton of the most famous Yeti track find of all time.[†] Recall as well that footprints are not necessarily an accurate record of the shape of the sole of the foot, but more of a record of the way the foot strikes the substrate through the walking cycle.

If you look at your own footprints in the wet sand on a beach, you will see that—depending on how you were moving—the shape of the prints differs. If you run, the toes and the ball of the foot dig into the sand, the heel may never touch it, and the print may be shallow because you barely touch the ground as you run. If you walk normally, the heel impression is wider and deeper than the actual size of the heel because the foot touches heel-first and thus the weight of the body goes into the heel part of the footprint as you walk. In soft sand, you may leave a footprint that is wider than your foot because it sinks into the sand, which collapses easily into the impression. On muddy surfaces, similarly, the foot may slide forward and/or sideways, leaving a print that is larger than

* John Napier, *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality* (New York: Dutton, 1973), 205.

† Michael Ward, “The Yeti Footprints: Myth and Reality,” *Alpine Journal* (1999): 85.

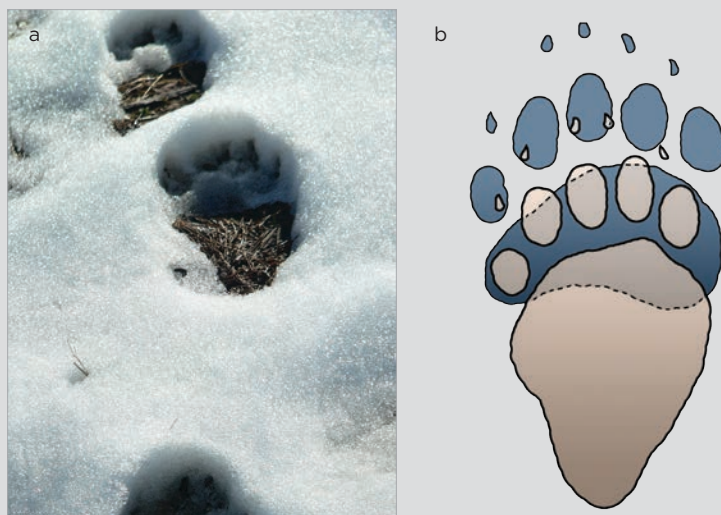


Figure B.1 The transformation of bear tracks (a), such as these photographed near Havre de Grace, Maryland, into human-looking footprints (b). ([a] Photograph by Lewis B. Glick; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; [b] illustration by Daniel Loxton)

your foot. In firm sand, though, you may leave only a partial print or a footprint that is narrower than your foot, as do people with high arches, since the curve of the instep may never touch the sand.

The same dynamics apply, but with slight differences, to footprints in the snow. If the snow is quite deep, you leave very large prints, since the ankle and leg as well as the foot plunge into the snow; the hole may get larger when you pull your leg out and forward on the next stride. Even in a thin coating of snow, the sides of the print often collapse inward after the foot is removed. Even the slightest bit of melting enlarges a footprint, and prints may melt unevenly if shaded parts of a trackway remain cool while the sun strikes another part directly. Ordinary tracks can become distorted, with some parts remaining sharp while others are erased.

Many of those who saw “Yeti” prints realized that hoofed animals and wolves can leave large paired trackways in the snow (especially deep snow). Most animals tend to walk single file and often step in the footprints of their leader, thus enlarging them. Many of the “Yeti” tracks discussed in this chapter have suspiciously narrow heels, which is typical of bears but not humans. All it

takes for bear tracks to look more human is for the hind foot to step into the print made by the front foot (which bears do naturally), wiping out the hind-toe impressions and leaving only a much longer footprint with four or five oval front-toe impressions that resemble those of humans (figure B.1). Add a bit of melting to round out the heel region, and you have a very plausible-looking Yeti footprint.

Another thing to remember about human-like Yeti tracks: whatever made them, it was *not* a large ape-like creature similar to *Gigantopithecus*. All living and fossil apes have feet that are shaped very differently from those that made the tracks, with a much larger big toe farther back on the foot that allows for grasping. If the “Yeti” and “Bigfoot” tracks that have been photographed so far are from a real cryptid—not a hoax or a bear or another known animal—the creature would have to be very human-like, since completely modern bipedal posture is a feature found only in the more advanced hominids. The earliest known foot bones of the hominids, such as those of *Ardipithecus* from Ethiopia, dated to 4.4 million years ago, indicate that they did not have a modern human foot or walking gait.* But the famous footprints of *Australopithecus* from Laetoli, Tanzania, which are 3.5 million years old, show that a fully modern gait had evolved by that time.† Thus if the Yeti and Bigfoot footprints are real, the creature that made them should look much more human-like (comparable to *Australopithecus* or early *Homo*) than ape-like.

Plaster replicas of “Yeti” footprints are artistic reconstructions from photographs, not precise casts of the original prints. Just try to make a plaster cast of a footprint in the snow, and you will discover that you run into many problems. First, most of the people who have reported “Yeti” tracks rarely carry large quantities of plaster, a mixing bowl, and extra water to make a cast. Second, if the temperature is at or below freezing, only ice would be available to mix with the powdered plaster, so it would be impossible to make a liquid mixture. And third, plaster produces heat (an exothermic reaction) as it begins to set, which would melt the track and distort its original shape. Thus the “Yeti”

* Stone Age Institute, “New Pliocene Hominids from Gona, Afar, Ethiopia,” January 10, 2005, http://web.archive.org/web/20080624005441/http://www.stoneageinstitute.org/news/gona_nature_paper.shtml (accessed October 22, 2011).

† David A. Raichlen, Adam D. Gordon, William E. H. Harcourt-Smith, Adam D. Foster, and Wm. Randall Haas Jr., “Laetoli Footprints Preserve Earliest Direct Evidence of Human-Like Bipedal Biomechanics,” *PLoS ONE* 5, no. 3 (2010): e9769.

tracks exhibited on television shows that are touted by cryptozoologists are pure guesswork. They are replicas that match the outline of the prints as seen in a photograph, but the depth and three-dimensional detail are inferred from the pattern of light and shadow in the hollows of the prints as they appear in the photograph.

British explorers had been making repeated attempts to reach the peak of Mount Everest since the 1920s, when surveyors determined that it was the world's highest mountain. Many expeditions had climbed partway up and made observations on the best route, but none had succeeded in reaching the summit at 29,028 feet. The biggest obstacle is that the air is so thin (less than one-third the pressure at sea level) that most climbers require bottled oxygen, which was not available to the early climbers. The extreme altitude causes fatal heart attacks, blindness, and hemorrhaging of blood into the brain or lungs. More than 175 people have died trying to reach the summit, including all the members of the 1924 British Mount Everest Expedition (one of the first full-scale attempts), who vanished completely. The frozen body of one of the climbers, George Mallory, was found and recovered seventy-five years later!

During an expedition mounted in 1952 to explore routes to Everest, Edouard Wyss-Dunant's Swiss team discovered possible Yeti tracks at an elevation above 16,000 feet. Wyss-Dunant determined that the clawed tracks his team found had been made by a family of plantigrade quadrupeds—which is to say, bears.⁶⁴ The real zoological question, he felt, was *which* species of bear? He wrote, "The moment has come to attack the real problem and no longer seek at any cost to justify a myth. But there will doubtless be fewer followers for a zoological expedition than for one that searches for a mythical creature to the full accompaniment of the Press."⁶⁵ The Swiss expedition is also notable for an alleged Yeti attack on a porter (who claimed later in the year that he had been seized by a Yeti while on the trail, and then released). The Swiss team members pointed out that there was absolutely no evidence to corroborate this yarn: "It might have been the Snowman, it might have been a bear. Or, it might have been some freak of imagination."⁶⁶

Finally, in 1953, Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander, and the experienced Sherpa Tenzing Norgay reached the summit of Mount Everest—and the world

was electrified with the news. Yet, in the midst of the celebration for this remarkable human achievement, people wanted to know: Had Hillary or the team found footprints on the mountain, as Wyss-Dunant's team had the year before? Team leader Colonel John Hunt was a believer in the creature⁶⁷ (he had found tracks on an earlier expedition,⁶⁸ and called for an expedition in search of it)⁶⁹ but said, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but we saw no trace of him at all. I think we were too large a party for any Abominable Snowmen. They like seclusion and solitude."⁷⁰ Tenzing Norgay reported in his first autobiography that he had never seen the Yeti, but believed that it existed because his father had seen it.⁷¹ Later in his life, however, Tenzing became much more skeptical about the existence the Yeti.⁷²

In search of a sensational story to capitalize on the Everest craze and attract readers, in 1954 the *Daily Mail* funded a big expedition to search the Himalayas for evidence of the Yeti. It included a number of mountaineers, journalists, and scientists—plus as many as 370 men to carry all the gear.⁷³ They tramped the Himalayas for fifteen weeks, but found nothing more than some possible Yeti hair, poor tracks, and questionable animal droppings. The lead climber of the expedition, John Angelo Jackson, photographed footprints in the snow of many known animals, as well as large tracks that could not be identified, although later he admitted that they could have been the result of the melting of a more conventional footprint. He also photographed symbolic paintings of the Yeti in Tengboche gompa, a fortified Tibetan monastery.

The team examined an alleged Yeti scalp found in the small Buddhist temple in the village of Pangboche in Nepal (figure 3.4). Team zoologist Charles Stonor at first assessed this object as "quite obviously the skin from the top of the head of the animal," adding that he was "utterly unable to identify it with any animal known to science."⁷⁴ The hairs varied from dark brown to fox red. However, hair samples and photographs sent to Frederick Wood Jones, an anatomist familiar with hair samples, revealed a very different story. As Stonor explained, Wood Jones "was able eventually to pronounce beyond all doubt that the object was not a true scalp at all, but fashioned from a piece cut off the shoulder of some unknown beast—certainly not a bear or an ape—and worked into the shape of a cranium while the skin was still fresh and soft."⁷⁵ (The "unknown beast" that contributed its skin to the manufacture of this and another alleged Yeti scalp relic has since been firmly identified, as we will see.)

Despite the lack of success, two members of the expedition published lengthy books on their participation and their impressions of the evidence for



Figure 3.4 An alleged Yeti scalp examined at the Pangboche monastery by Charles Stonor, a member of the expedition to the Himalayas funded by the *Daily Mail* in 1954. (Reproduced by permission of Fortean Picture Library, Ruthin, Wales)

the existence of the Yeti. Both books were published in 1955, and each cites long passages from the other. One book, by newspaperman Ralph Izzard, is a gripping account of the expedition from the journalist's perspective.⁷⁶ Most of the book focuses on the details of each day of the expedition and the travails of trekking through such rugged country. Izzard spent two days following an 8-mile trackway of what he believed to be a pair of Yetis.⁷⁷ They made footprints about 8 to 9 inches long and 4 to 5 inches across, with a stride of about 2 feet, 3 inches between footfalls. Izzard detailed how the Yeti tracks made detours to avoid man-made paths and cottages, preventing contact with humans, and how the Yetis stumbled over a hidden hazard in the snow and left an imprint in the snowbank when they landed. Izzard and his partner Gerald Russell took only a limited number of photographs of this trackway after two days of following it, however. He also admitted that the footprints were about four days old and showed signs of melting, which enlarged them and made them less distinct.

Izzard also reprinted a letter originally published in the *Statesman* from Prince Peter of Greece, who lived in Kalimpong, Nepal, at the time.⁷⁸ Although the prince's letter asserts his belief in the existence of some sort of Abominable Snowman, he wrote:

The real species, the flesh-and-blood Snowman is, I think, all the same, both a bear (perhaps a brown Himalayan bear) and a monkey. Tracks of both have been seen and the Swiss Everest Expedition's leader, Professor [Edouard] Wyss-Dunant, found what he considered to be the footmarks of a whole family of plantigrades [animals that walk on the soles of their feet, with their heels on the ground, as do humans, apes, and bears] on the slopes of the world's highest mountain. The monkey, however, seems to be the more prevalent of the two, and it is usually an anthropoid, ape-like creature that witnesses have reported having seen.⁷⁹

The other book that emerged from the *Daily Mail* expedition was written by Stonor, one of the scientific officers of the group. As befits his training, his book is filled with descriptions of much of the wildlife and other scientific dimensions of the trek (including descriptions of Tibetan natural history and culture), rather than with the more sensationalist reports of Izzard. Stonor recounts the stories of the Sherpas and other tribesmen about the nature of the ape-like Yeti:

It was the first that Pasang Nima had seen, and he described it as the size and build of a small man. Its head was covered with long hair, as was the middle part of the body and the thighs. The face and chest did not look to be so hairy, and the hair on its legs below its knees was short.

The colour he described was "both dark and light" and the chest looked to be reddish. The Yeti was walking on two legs, nearly as upright as a man, but kept bending down to grub in the ground, he thought for roots. . . . After a time it saw the watchers, and ran off into the undergrowth, still on two legs, but with a sidling gait (which he imitated) giving a loud high-pitched cry heard by all who had been watching it.⁸⁰

In his book and his reports for the newspapers, Stonor discussed different kinds of beasts that the Tibetans refer to as Yeti, and he determined from eyewitness accounts that the *Dzu-teh* of Tibet "is undoubtedly identical with the Himalayan red bear."⁸¹ Like the journalist Izzard, the scientist Stonor found enticing "Yeti" footprints—but, as a scientist, was forced to admit that the tracks were too blurred with melting to "do more than record a general im-

pression that they were made by a two-legged animal.” Scientific honesty, he wrote, “required that we should claim no positive identification.”⁸² Newspaper stories claimed that there was a live Yeti in a zoo in Shigatse, a town in Tibet,⁸³ but Stonor concluded from a traveler’s description that the animal was a gibbon.⁸⁴ Although some Yeti tales clearly described bears,⁸⁵ and despite the expedition’s general failure to confirm the existence of the Yeti, Stonor concluded that “some unknown and highly intelligent form of ape does in fact maintain a precarious foothold in the alpine zone of the Himalayas.”⁸⁶

OILMAN SLICK, CIA CONNECTIONS, AND HILLARY RETURNS

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British, French, Swiss, and German colonials and adventurers were among the leaders in the exploration of the Himalayas. Because they worked closely with Sherpas and other local peoples, European mountaineers also recorded most of the early reports of the Yeti. After the failure of the *Daily Mail* expedition of 1954 to produce conclusive evidence to support the claims for the existence of the Yeti, the next attempt was made not by British explorers, scientists, or journalists, but by a rich Texas oilman with the interesting name of Tom Slick, who financed three expeditions following his personal scouting in the area in 1956. According to his biographer Loren Coleman, Slick had been fascinated by Central Asia since his childhood and had traveled to the region many times and heard the Yeti legends. Although Texas-bred, he was a member of the eastern Establishment, having graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale University. He used the vast wealth he inherited from his father not only to fund expeditions to find Bigfoot, the Loch Ness monster, and the Yeti, but to establish a number of institutions for scientific and technological research. Slick was “a member of an elite circle of internationalists” whose “informal discussions on world peace” included Jimmy Stewart, Albert Schweitzer, Dwight Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, and John Foster Dulles. A moderate Republican, Slick rebelled against the isolationism and exceptionalism of the Republican Party in the 1950s and yearned for a more internationalist approach; these ideas were expressed in his book *Permanent Peace: A Check and Balance Plan* (1958). He argued that the United States and the Communist bloc should form a world police force that would prevent wars (much stronger than the modern United Nations peacekeeper forces) and urged the United States and the Soviet Union to dismantle their nuclear arsenals and work toward global peace. In 1960 and 1961, he even sponsored several large international meet-

ings to further those goals.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, the weakness of the United Nations at that time and the hawkish attitudes of the Cold Warriors in both the United States and the Soviet Union prevented such goals from being realized.

According to Brian Regal, Slick made his first foray to find the Yeti in 1956. While in Central Asia, he met Irish explorer Peter Byrne, who became a critical player in both the Yeti and Bigfoot hunts.⁸⁸ Coleman suggested that both Byrne and Slick were working for the CIA during their exploits in Central Asia,⁸⁹ and, according to Regal, the connection between spying and hunting cryptids was a common pattern.⁹⁰ For example, anthropologists Carleton Coon and George Agogino, both of whom were active in trying to determine if the Yeti was real, also had CIA connections. Ivan Sanderson worked for British intelligence during World War II, and several other prominent scientists (such as S. Dillon Ripley and George Gaylord Simpson) also worked in intelligence in the Allied armies during the war. In the postwar world, there were few Americans in Central Asia who could keep tabs on the Chinese struggles with Tibet or the Soviet interests in the region. Thus people like Slick (with his money and powerful friends and his contacts with Dulles) were valuable resources for the United States to monitor the southern regions of Communist China and Soviet Russia.

In 1957, Slick and Byrne (with the backing of Luce, who wanted the rights to the first photographs of the Yeti) spent a month in the region.⁹¹ Although they reported three sets of tracks that they attributed to the Yeti, little came of this trip.⁹² “Like all the various monster expeditions before and since,” wrote Regal, “the Slick project wandered around the region finding a few bits and pieces here and there: a few possible footprints, some hair samples, an apparent Yeti dung sample, lots of local stories, and not much else.”⁹³

Slick’s sequel in 1958 was an altogether more Texas-size affair: bigger headlines, bigger budget, and bigger boasts. (Slick declared at the outset that the Yeti would be found by the end of the year.)⁹⁴ Led this time by Gerald Russell (a veteran of the *Daily Mail* expedition of 1954), the expedition of almost 100 people brought innovations as well as money and manpower—some sillier than others.⁹⁵ Their “pack of three Bluetick hounds” seemed like a good idea, as did their optimistic carting around of “two of a newly developed air-gun which propels hypodermic cartridges containing a temporary paralyzing drug.”⁹⁶ But it is hard to take entirely seriously Russell’s decision that “all the white hunters will be disguised as natives. We will wear rough woolen Sherpa vests, woolen hats, and felt Tibetan knee boots. Our faces will be stained brown.” Even Byrne described the disguise plan as “seemingly ridiculous,”⁹⁷

which it may well have been in the light of the horde of folks stomping along in their party. They stayed in the field from February until June,⁹⁸ during which time they heard about Yetis catching frogs,⁹⁹ boasted of finding the cave of an Abominable Snowman,¹⁰⁰ and visited the Pangboche temple where the *Daily Mail* expedition had sampled hairs from the “Yeti scalp”¹⁰¹ and tried to reanalyze the hairs or obtain the scalp. The temple also had a mummified hand that was claimed to belong to the Yeti. It was a sacred relic, so it was not supposed to be desecrated for scientific study.

Nonetheless, Slick’s people got another shot at the Yeti hand at Pangboche in 1959, during Slick’s last expedition (a much smaller affair, involving only Byrne and his brother).¹⁰² According to Regal, Byrne ingratiated himself with the monks—and then, when he got the chance, stealthily removed some finger bones from the hand, replaced them with human bones, and rewrapped the relic so the theft was undetected.¹⁰³ In an interview with the BBC, Byrne confirmed that he had indeed swapped a human finger for a finger from the relic (though he said the substitution was done openly, in exchange for a donation to the temple).¹⁰⁴ Another story claims that Slick had Byrne give the bones of the “Yeti hand” to the famous actor Jimmy Stewart, a silent backer of their project, who smuggled it home in his luggage.¹⁰⁵ According to Byrne, the finger bones were actually smuggled in Gloria Stewart’s lingerie case, so customs officials were reluctant to search it.¹⁰⁶ The bones were sent to anatomist, primatologist, and anthropologist William Charles Osman Hill, at the Zoological Society of London, who was puzzled by them and at first thought that they resembled Neanderthal finger bones; later studies by Carleton Coon showed that the finger bones were human.¹⁰⁷ Recently rediscovered among the Osman Hill material in the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, the finger bones have now been definitively identified as human using DNA analysis. Said genetic expert Rob Ogden, who conducted the tests, “It wasn’t too surprising but it was obviously slightly disappointing that you hadn’t discovered something brand new. Human was what we were expecting and human is what we got.”¹⁰⁸ This was the final epilogue of a book that long since closed on failure. Despite the audacious hype (“Expedition a Success, Proves Yeti Exists” was the title of Slick’s summary for the 1958 expedition)¹⁰⁹ and all the time and money spent (at least \$100,000 and perhaps double that),¹¹⁰ the results of the Slick expeditions were ultimately dismal. Coon and the others who examined the hair and dung samples sent by Slick and Byrne concluded that there was no evidence of the Yeti in them and became disillusioned with the entire Yeti hunt, and a mummified “Yeti

leg” tracked down during one of Slick’s expeditions turned out to be from a snow leopard.¹¹¹ Looking over this body of evidence, Napier reflected that “the mummified paw of a snow leopard, a mummified human hand, and a footprint or two—add up to nothing at all. No single item contributed one jot or tittle of proof to the Himalayan Bigfoot legend.”¹¹²

Meanwhile, the Chinese began to crack down after the Tibetan uprising of 1959, which led the Dalai Lama to flee into exile in India. The Chinese viewed the Yeti hunts as espionage, so they closed the country’s borders and made it very hard for expeditions to travel beyond Nepal. One of the last to do so, in 1960/1961, was mounted by Everest conqueror Sir Edmund Hillary and America’s favorite animal expert, Marlin Perkins. Perkins, a zoologist, was the director of the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, in which role he had also hosted the hit animal program *Zoo Parade*.¹¹³ (Perkins would go on to host *Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom*, another immensely popular television show about wild animals and nature.) Backed by *World Book Encyclopedia*, the huge expedition team included a number of scientists (and 150 porters).¹¹⁴ The Hillary-Perkins crew went straight to the Pangboche monastery, where they persuaded the monks to let them examine the “Yeti hand” (not knowing that Byrne had switched the relic’s finger bones with those of a human). They even successfully arranged to borrow the “Yeti scalp” from the Khumjung monastery, and brought it back with them for expert examination in London, Paris, and Chicago. As Hillary explained, the scientists who studied the scalp found that “although it was an interesting and probably ancient relic, it was really a fake—molded from the skin of a serow. It had certainly never held the cunning brain of the elusive Yeti.”¹¹⁵

These examinations confirmed what Hillary’s team had discovered in the field: when they acquired three hides from serows (mid-size wild animals that resemble goats or antelopes), they suspected immediately that the hides were a match to the skin used to manufacture the Pangboche “Yeti scalp” and a very similar relic at the monastery at Khumjung (a village 8 miles from Pangboche). As team member Desmond Doig excitedly noted in his journal that night, “Almost certainly the Khumjung and Pangboche scalps are twins, made on the same mold of serow’s hide. The shape, color, and essential dimensions are identical; two conical, balding caps of black-and-henna-colored bristles with distinct median crests and punctured with holes around their bases which look suspiciously like those made by nails used to hold the scalps onto their mold.” To test this impression, “we set about making two of our own, sacrificing one of the three serow hides we had acquired, and employing

an unsuspecting lama to carve the molds directly from a freshly felled pine log. . . . After four days of experiment we possessed two distinctly anthropoid ‘scalps,’ unlike those in the Khumjung and Pangboche monasteries only in their newness and wealth of hair.” Finally, they sent hair samples from both of the allegedly authentic Yeti scalps and from both of the newly re-created fake scalps to Osman Hill for analysis, without telling him the origins of the samples. “If the two samples were declared identical,” Doig reflected, “the scalps would be fakes and an important argument in favor of Yetis would have been defeated.”¹¹⁶ And that is exactly what happened. Hillary takes up the story: “Hill showed us microscopic sectional photographs he had taken of the bristles from the Khumjung and Pangboche scalps and from our own fakes, molded from serow. Until then he did not know which was which—we hadn’t told him the origin of the bristles when we sent them from Khumjung. Dr. Hill was confident that all the specimens belonged to the same genus of animal.”¹¹⁷ The other physical evidence that supposedly argued for the existence of the Yeti was similarly disappointing. The alleged Yeti hand from the Pangboche monastery proved to be “essentially a human hand, strung together with wire, with the possible inclusion of several animal bones” (presumably those switched by Byrne).¹¹⁸ The “Yeti skins” turned out to be the pelts of Himalayan brown bears, leaving Hillary’s expedition with the “very strong inference that this bear might well have been the source of much of the Yeti legend.” Looking over this evidence, and considering their failure to turn up “a single case of a lama who claimed personally to have seen a Yeti,” Hillary concluded:

There is no doubt that the Sherpas accept the fact that the Yeti really exists. But then they believe just as confidently that their gods live in comfort on the summit of Mount Everest. We found it quite impossible to divorce the Yeti from the supernatural. To a Sherpa the ability of a Yeti to make himself invisible at will is just as important a part of description as his probable shape and size. Part animal, part human, part demon—the Yeti is as calmly and uncritically accepted as we accept Father Christmas when we are children.

Pleasant though we felt it would be to believe in the existence of the Yeti, when faced with the universal collapse of the main evidence in support of this creature the members of my expedition—doctor, scientists, zoologists and mountaineers alike—could not in all conscience view it as more than a fascinating fairy tale, born of the rare and frightening view of strange animals, molded by superstition, and enthusiastically nurtured by Western expeditions.¹¹⁹

The Hillary-Perkins expedition not only investigated remains of the Yeti, but also did research on high-altitude medicine, so the absence of proof of the existence of the Yeti did not make the expedition a complete failure. More important, Hillary was sensitive to and concerned about the plight of the Nepalese and especially the Sherpas, who had helped him climb Mount Everest and become world famous. In exchange for the loan of the "Yeti scalp," he and his expedition's sponsors paid for a village elder to "accompany the Yeti scalp wherever it may be taken in America and Europe" and for urgent renovations at the monastery.¹²⁰ Even more lasting were his efforts to raise funds for the construction of numerous schools and other public buildings in impoverished Nepalese villages.¹²¹

By this point, nearly all the Western Yeti hunters were thoroughly discouraged by the repeated failures of the successive expeditions. The more people looked for the Yeti and the more "evidence" they analyzed, the less likely the existence of the Yeti became. The shenanigans and CIA connections of the Slick-Byrne group not only had disillusioned many believers, but had alarmed the Chinese government. Because the Chinese viewed all the Yeti hunters as spies, they clamped down even further on them, even as they crushed Tibet, destroyed the Lamaist religion and political system, and drove the Dalai Lama into exile. After the Hillary-Perkins expedition, no effort was made to mount further trips into Tibet, since the Chinese were completely in control and did not allow foreigners into the country. The short golden age of Yeti hunting through the 1950s came to an end, and almost no one returned to the Himalayas for many years to find the Yeti. As John Napier put it, "The Hillary Expedition of 1960-61 had the effect of dampening the enthusiasm of all but the staunchest of Yeti supporters. Scientists smiled knowingly, mountaineers lost interest, and journalists found other fish to fry."¹²²

WHILLANS, WOOLDRIDGE, THE CHINESE, THE RUSSIANS— AND A HOAX

For almost a decade, the closure of Tibet by the Chinese made it difficult to travel to the country to find evidence of the Yeti. The various expeditions undertaken before 1960 had found nothing: all the "Yeti scalps" in Tibetan monasteries were serow pelts; "Yeti" hands were human hands; "Yeti" dung and hair came from known animals; and "Yeti" trackways were still not convincing. Although the local peoples continued to report seeing the Yeti, the only "sighting" of a supposed Yeti by a Westerner had been by the Brit-

ish-Greek explorer and photographer N. A. Tombazi in 1925; he later decided that the figure he had seen was a hermit, although John Napier showed that the prints Tombazi reported are better explained as those of a bear.¹²³ But in the summer of 1970, the mountaineer Don Whillans, who was co-leading an expedition to climb Annapurna from the Nepalese side, reported footprints of Yeti-like appearance at 13,000 feet. However, his photograph shows a trackway that probably was made by a quadruped.¹²⁴ The same night, Whillans saw what he considered to be an ape-like animal bounding along on all fours a long distance from his tent. "I saw some black blobs up the slope in the shadows, then I saw a blob that hadn't been there a moment before," he said. "It was something moving 'round. . . . Then it bounded out of the shadows and headed straight up the slope in the absolutely bright moonlight. It looked like an ape. I don't think it was a bear."¹²⁵ He had been equally uncertain days earlier: "It could have been a bear but it looked much more like a monkey-type thing."¹²⁶ Whillans never saw the creature again, and it had been so far away from him ("about a quarter of a mile") that he could provide few details about his distant sighting in the darkness—except that it was apparently running on four legs. This detail suggests that it was a Himalayan brown bear or another known quadruped, rather than a supposedly bipedal Yeti.

The continued closure of Tibet only increased the desire of Western mountaineers and cryptozoologists to visit the country. It focused attention on the area, suggesting that the Chinese had proof of the existence of the Yeti and were hiding it. Indeed, the Chinese themselves examined the legend, sending more than 100 investigators into the region in 1977 to exhaustively track down every lead and look in every possible place where the Yeti might lurk. They found absolutely nothing. Eventually, in 1988, the Chinese government allowed a Western expedition into Tibet, but it, too, found no evidence of the Yeti. Chinese scientists have themselves investigated the legends of the Yeti and other Wildmen that fall within their national borders. For example, according to anthropologist Zhou Guoxing,

A large-scale scientific investigation sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Sciences was carried out in these areas [northwestern Hubei and southern Shanxi provinces] in 1977. More than 100 people participated in it for nearly a year. . . . Although the investigation was unusual in its scale, number of participants, and duration, no direct proof was found of the existence of the Wildman, and only footprints, pieces of head hair, and feces presumed to be those of Wildman were recovered.

Although Zhou believed that it can be inferred on the basis of indirect evidence that “these unknown animals are not mere creatures of fiction,” he conceded that the majority of Chinese scientists do not agree. Zhou also noted the long history of failed Chinese attempts to confirm the Wildman:

Since the end of the 1950's, China has organized a series of on-the-spot investigations of Wildman in Tibet, and the provinces of Yunnan, Hubei, Shanxi, and Zhejiang. Among the participants in these investigations have been a number of professional scientists, such as anthropologists, geologists, zoologists, and botanists, as well as personnel in specific fields of zoological parks and natural history museums. Taking part in the investigation in the Shennongjia forest area are experienced huntsmen and skilled scouts. Up to the present time, apart from the above-mentioned hand and foot samples obtained in the Jiulong Mountain areas of Zhejiang Province [found to be from a monkey, perhaps a macaque], no direct physical evidence has been found to support the existence of Wildman.¹²⁷

In 1998, the head of the Regional Association for Wildlife Protection, Liu Wulin, told the Xinhua news agency that all the fur samples and footprints came from the Himalayan brown bear and that nothing gave evidence of the existence of the Yeti in Tibet¹²⁸ (although the Chinese are still hopeful of finding the creature, despite the complete failure of every effort).

Cold War tension even extended to monster hunting. Gerald Russell, leader of the American-financed expedition led by Tom Slick in 1958, said, “Our task this time has assumed all the more significance now that the Russians are already in the field on the Pamir plateau. It is now an international race for the yeti.”¹²⁹ Led by Boris Porshnev, several Soviet expeditions were made to the Pamir Mountains, the northwestern extension of the Himalayas, which stretch from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan through China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Those who live in these mountains also have their share of legends about the “Wild Man of the Snows,” known as the Almasti or Almas. Porshnev based his ideas on the earlier work of Badzar Baradiin, an ethnologist who claimed to have seen the Almasti when exploring and collecting cultural artifacts in Tibet in 1906. Porshnev and the Soviets were motivated by their Marxist ideology to view the search for the “Wild Man” as a way to confirm materialism and evolutionary explanations of human origins and behavior.¹³⁰ Cryptozoologists like Bernard Heuvelmans and Ivan Sanderson regarded *Gigantopithecus* as evidence for the survival of a giant ape in the form of the Yeti, but the Almasti does not fit that legend. Rather than being a ferocious

beast that kills yaks and humans, the Almasti was kind to the Soviet peasants and does not have mythological stature or gigantic proportions, as the Yeti allegedly does. Porshnev thought that they were a relict population of Neanderthals who had survived the extinction of that species during the Ice Age of the Pleistocene epoch (2.5 million–11,700 years ago). He led an unsuccessful expedition to the Pamir Mountains, and soon his career went into decline and he fell out of favor with the Soviet regime. After Porshnev's downfall, some of his followers, including Dmitri Bayanov and Marie-Jeanne Koffman, tried to keep the Almasti hunt in the Pamirs alive in the 1960s and 1970s, but their expeditions met with failure.¹³¹

“DRAGON BONES” AND *GIGANTOPITHECUS*

In almost any Chinese city are open-air markets with many different things for sale. The Chinese pharmacists, or apothecaries, sell a wide variety of products that are thought to be effective medicines, from minerals and crystals, to roots and herbs, to parts of various animals—over 130,000 are known and used in traditional Chinese medicine. Some are common and harmless, but others—like tiger penises, rhinoceros horns, bear gallbladders, turtle plastrons, and seahorses—have caused vulnerable animal populations to be poached and hunted nearly to extinction. Chinese medicine also includes human products, including organs, bones, fingernails, hair, dandruff, earwax, feces, urine, and sweat. But many Chinese apothecaries also sell ground-up “dragon bones”—pieces of fossil bone and teeth that have been poached from caves and fossil sites, often before scientists were able to find them. Indeed, for centuries, the Chinese have been mining and destroying fossils to be ground up and turned into medicine.

Some paleontologists have learned that shopping in the apothecaries for “dragon bones” is the best way to find Chinese fossils and acquire them for science. However, it was often impossible to determine where there might be important deposits nearby because the “dragon bones” were extremely valuable and the Chinese carefully guarded the secrets of their sources. In the 1850s and 1860s, British travelers sent their specimens to London, where in 1870, paleontologist Richard Owen at the British Museum identified teeth of extinct rhinos, tapirs, elephants, hyenas, horses, and many other Ice Age mammals whose extant descendants are no longer found in China. Between 1899 and 1902, German travelers in China sent paleontologist Max Schlosser



Figure B.2 A human skull compared with a reconstructed skull of *Gigantopithecus blacki*. (Illustration by Pat Linse, with Daniel Loxton)

many teeth from Ice Age mammals. Among them was the first tooth that led to the discovery of “Peking Man” (now considered to be *Homo erectus*) from the Zhoukoudian caves near Beijing. In 1921, paleontologist Walter Granger of the American Museum of Natural History managed to find the farmer who was supplying the apothecaries, and he excavated a cave that yielded many extinct mammals, including an Ice Age tapir that was as large as a modern rhino.

So fossil collecting in Chinese drugstores was a tried-and-true technique for scientists such as German geologist and paleontologist Gustav Heinrich Ralph von Koenigswald. He started his career by finding and describing the famous skullcap of “Java Man” (*Homo erectus*) at Mojokerto in 1937 and was the first to realize that “Java Man” was the same species as “Peking Man.” He also did work on early humans and primates in Africa and many other regions.

In 1935, he found a huge primate molar in a Chinese apothecary shop. He recognized immediately that it was from a gigantic ape not too different from the modern orangutan, but much larger, and named it *Gigantopithecus blacki* (figure B.2). The genus means “gigantic ape” in Greek, and the species is named in honor of Davidson Black, a pioneer in Chinese paleontology who was especially important in the discovery of “Peking Man.” Von Koenigswald

spent four more years roaming Chinese marketplaces, but found only three more teeth of *Gigantopithecus*. He then talked to pharmacists who told him that the teeth came from Guangxi Province, in southern China. Using the kind of dirt clinging to the teeth and the gnaw marks of rodents as clues, he guessed that they were from cave deposits. When he finally found the caves, the teeth were mixed with middle Pleistocene elephant and panda fossils, so he estimated their age as between 125,000 and 700,000 years.

As he continued to track down the source of the teeth, the Japanese invaded China and von Koenigswald was taken prisoner. Even though he had been born in Berlin in 1902 (making him German by birth and supposedly a Japanese ally), von Koenigswald had acquired Dutch citizenship during his years in Java (then a Dutch colony), so the Japanese incarcerated him in a prisoner-of-war camp. He survived the ordeal and managed to hide all but one of his fossils from the Japanese; one skull was presented to Emperor Hirohito but was recovered after the war. His *Gigantopithecus* fossils had been buried in a milk bottle in a friend's backyard for safekeeping and were retrieved after the war. While he was imprisoned, his colleague Franz Weidenreich was at the American Museum of Natural History, where he published many of von Koenigswald's finds (including the idea that "Java Man" and "Peking Man" were just different samples of *Homo erectus*, and the best descriptions of the "Peking Man" specimens), assuming that von Koenigswald was dead. So even though von Koenigswald made most of the discoveries, the volumes were published with Weidenreich as the author. After the war, von Koenigswald joined Weidenreich in New York and worked with him again.*

Since the 1930s, many more *Gigantopithecus* specimens have been found in the original cave deposits, including some complete lower jaws (figure B.3). Unfortunately, no other non-dentary skeletal parts from this mysterious ape are known, despite decades of searching by the large number of Chinese paleontologists who now work on the deposits. More recently, anthropologist Russell Ciochon revisited the region around Guangxi Province and found more specimens of *Gigantopithecus*. He did so by shifting his focus to cave deposits in northern Vietnam, which are unspoiled by the fossil poachers who rob the Chinese caves to supply bones for apothecaries to grind up. Still, even after

* G. H. R. von Koenigswald, "*Gigantopithecus blacki* von Koenigswald, a Giant Fossil Homioid from the Pleistocene of Southern China," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 43 (1952): 295-325.



Figure B.3

A cast of the jaw of *Gigantopithecus blacki*, showing the robust thick-enameled and heavily worn molars. (Photograph by Donald R. Prothero)

more than seventy-five years since the first tooth was found, only three lower jaws and about 1,300 isolated teeth of this mysterious primate have been discovered. There is also a second species, *Gigantopithecus giganteus*, from India, which (despite its name) is about half the size of *Gigantopithecus blacki*. A third species, *Gigantopithecus bilaspurensis*, comes from much older beds (6–9 million years old) in India, suggesting that the *Gigantopithecus* line goes back to at least 9 million years ago and the evolutionary radiation of early apes such as the dryopithecines.

Because paleontologists have only the lower jaw to go on, it is hard to reliably estimate the size of the entire creature. Ciochon and his colleagues estimated that it was about 10 feet tall and weighed about 1,200 pounds. Elwyn Simons and Peter Ettel suggested that it was proportioned like a gorilla, standing about 9 feet tall and weighing about 900 pounds.* Either way, it was the largest primate that has ever lived, immensely bigger than a gorilla (the largest living primate) or even the biggest human giants.

What does remain of *Gigantopithecus* are the heavily built jaws with huge teeth, especially the molars, which have very thick enamel (see figure B.3). Both the molars and the cheek teeth in front of them (premolars) are very

* Russell L. Ciochon, John Olsen, and Jamie James, *Other Origins: The Search for the Giant Ape in Human Prehistory* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990); Elwyn L. Simons and Peter C. Ettel, "Gigantopithecus," *Scientific American*, January 1970, 77–85.

broad and low-crowned, often with their entire occlusal surface ground down flat, suggesting that these apes ate a very tough, gritty diet. Close microscopic analysis of wear facets on the tooth enamel, and the presence of phytolith fossils from plants, show that *Gigantopithecus* ate mostly bamboo, as does the living giant panda.*

Gigantopithecus lived in Asia since at least the middle Miocene, about 9 million years ago, and were found mostly in East Asia during the Ice Ages. Careful dating of cave deposits in Vietnam, which yield both *Gigantopithecus* and *Homo erectus*, show that early humans invaded China about 800,000 years ago and that *Gigantopithecus* died out about 500,000 years later, around 300,000 years ago.† Although this time line certainly disproves the idea that *Homo erectus* immediately killed off its distant cousin, there are other possible factors for its extinction, including competition with giant pandas for bamboo and bamboo die-offs, which occur every twenty to sixty years and may have stressed the ape population and made them more vulnerable to competition from pandas or people.

Or *did* they die out? As Brian Regal points out, in the 1950s and 1960s some anthropologists like Carleton Coon made the inference that the Yeti was a relict population of *Gigantopithecus*.‡ At that time, many anthropologists embraced the multiregional hypothesis, which suggested that different populations of *Homo sapiens* had evolved separately over a million years ago from different stocks of primates in different regions. Asians were descendants of “Peking Man”; Neanderthals, of an early European *Homo*; Africans, of African *Homo erectus*; and so on. Although a few holdouts still support a version of the multiregional model (like Milford Wolpoff at the University of Michigan), genetic evidence that has been amassed since the 1980s has overwhelmingly demonstrated that it is false. Instead, the human genome shows that modern

*Russell L. Ciochon, Dolores R. Piperno, and Robert G. Thompson, “Opal Phytoliths Found on the Teeth of the Extinct Ape *Gigantopithecus blacki*: Implications for Paleodietary Studies,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 87 (1990): 8120–8124; Russell L. Ciochon, “The Ape That Was,” *Natural History*, November 1991, 54–62.

†R. Ciochon, V. T. Long, R. Larick, L. González, R. Grün, J. de Vos, C. Yonge, L. Taylor, H. Yoshida, and M. Reagan, “Dated Co-Occurrence of *Homo erectus* and *Gigantopithecus* from Tham Khuyen Cave, Vietnam,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 93, no. 7 (1996): 3016–3020.

‡Brian Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch: Crackpots, Eggheads, and Cryptozoology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 64–72.

Homo sapiens are all descended from African ancestors who spread across the Old World about 60,000 years ago, displacing any older populations of *Homo* (such as *Homo erectus*).* And the fossils plus the dating show that this “out of Africa” dispersal occurred more than once, since *Homo erectus* appears to have originated in Africa and then spread throughout the Old World (including China and Java) about 1.85 million years ago. Even more recent work in genetics shows that some populations (like Neanderthals) interbred with *Homo sapiens*, so when the invaders from Africa arrived, they incorporated the regional genome into theirs. Nonetheless, the hypothesis of multiregionalism and independent, isolated parallel evolution of *Homo sapiens* from local *Homo erectus* populations, as advocated by Coon in the 1950s (with its racist overtones), has long been discredited by anthropologists. Likewise, the idea that *Gigantopithecus* evolved in Asia into a human-like creature known as the Yeti is also discredited by the falsification of the multiregional hypothesis. So *Gigantopithecus* is no longer regarded as connected to the Yeti.

Not surprisingly, though, cryptozoologists beginning with Bernard Heuvelmans in 1952 have suggested that the Yeti (and, later, Bigfoot) is a surviving descendant of *Gigantopithecus*. The cryptozoological literature is full of unsupported speculations about the dispersal of these immense apes throughout Asia and North America from different primate stocks, and Bigfoot and Yeti are their relicts.† None of this amateur theorizing, based on outdated concepts of primate evolution, bears any relation to what anthropologists know about the real history of hominid fossils and human evolution. Many strong lines of evidence argue against the idea that either the Yeti or Bigfoot is a surviving *Gigantopithecus*:

- *Gigantopithecus* was a giant relative of the orangutan, not a close relative of humans. Although anthropologists do not have much evidence of its skeleton, it is reasonable to assume that its foot resembled that of an orangutan or another great ape, not that of a human, with its reduced big toe and inability to grasp. Thus its footprints should resemble ape footprints, not the human-like footprints allegedly produced by the Yeti or

* Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

† “The Bigfoot–Giganto Theory,” Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization, <http://www.bfro.net/ref/theories/mjm/whatrtha.asp> (accessed October 22, 2011).

Bigfoot. And the tracks should show the stooped knuckle-walking gait of the orangutan and all the other great apes, not the extremely human-like bipedal-walking posture allegedly shown by the Yeti and Bigfoot. (Indeed, one of the biggest problems with the film by Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin that purports to have captured Bigfoot is that the walking posture of the creature is almost completely human, not ape-like in the least.).

- Although *Gigantopithecus* fossils are rare, an animal as large as that ape would still be expected to be fossilized at least a few times if it had survived anywhere in the world after 300,000 years ago. For example, one pro-Bigfoot organization claims: "No research group has ever made an attempt to look for Giganto bones in North America, so no one should be surprised that Giganto remains have never been identified in North America. Ironically, the most vocal skeptics and scientists who rhetorically ask why no bones have been located and identified on this continent are the last people who would ever make an effort to look for them."* This assertion is patently false and reveals ignorance about the fossil record and the practice of paleontology. Paleontologists do not look for particular fossils, but collect any and all deposits that yield decent fossils. For deposits of the past 300,000 years (middle and late Pleistocene), there are extraordinarily good fossil records in both China, where hundreds of paleontologists have been working for many decades, and especially North America, where fossils of larger mammals (especially from cave deposits) have been found in every state in the United States and in most provinces in Canada.† Hundreds of paleontologists have collected these fossils for more than a century and documented them in excruciating detail. Many extremely rare species are known, including an American cheetah and a camel that was built like a mountain goat. Yet not once has anything resembling *Gigantopithecus* been found—not even the smallest tooth fragment (which could be easily recognized by its thick enamel and distinct low-crowned cusps). Contrary to the conspiratorial thinking of cryptozoologists, paleontologists would be overjoyed to find such a fossil and announce it with great fanfare because such a discovery could make a reputation. They have no reason to hide such a fossil in order to thwart cryptozoologists.

* Ibid.

† Björn Kurtén and Elaine Anderson, *Pleistocene Mammals of North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

One of the most famous “sightings” was by physicist and runner Anthony B. Wooldridge. On March 5, 1986, while doing a 200-mile run with just a rucksack in the upper Alaknanda Valley of northern India, he saw what he thought was a Yeti at an elevation of about 12,500 feet near Ghangaria:

It was difficult to restrain my excitement as I came to the realization that the only animal I could think of which remotely resembled this one before me was the Yeti. My skepticism about the creature’s existence was overturned by this all-too-real creature then in view. It was standing with its legs apart, apparently looking down the slope, with its right shoulder turned towards me. The head was large and squarish, and the whole body appeared to be covered with dark hair, although the upper arm was a slightly lighter color. The creature was amazingly good at remaining motionless, although the bush vibrated once or twice, and when I moved back to lower ground, it appeared to have changed its head position and to be looking directly at me.

I took a number of photographs from an estimated range of 150 meters [490 feet]. . . .

After about 45 minutes, the weather continued to deteriorate, and light snow began to fall. The animal still showed no sign of moving, although occasionally the shrub vibrated slightly. I moved back down the slope a short distance, and got the impression that the animal was now peering towards me around the other side of the shrub, but its feet had not changed in position.¹³²

Wooldridge then left the area as the snowfall increased. When he returned to civilization, his account was published. His photographs were a sensation in the cryptozoological community. Enlarged and digitally enhanced as far as they could be, they were analyzed, discussed, and debated endlessly about what the large dark object was and how it should be interpreted. But a subsequent trek revealed why the mysterious Yeti had been able to hold still for so long. A year later, Wooldridge retraced his trail to the same mountain site and took stereo photographs of the location. Photogrammetric analysis then revealed that the large black “hominid” was just an outcrop of rock! Wooldridge conceded that “beyond a reasonable doubt that what I had believed to be a stationary, living creature was, in reality, a rock.”¹³³

Like Bigfoot, the Yeti has been hoaxed. In 1996, the television program *Paranormal Borderland* played a video sequence taken from March 12 to August 6, 1996.¹³⁴ Called “The Snow Walker Film,” it was presented as genuine footage of the Yeti, but later investigation proved that the video had been a

staged hoax, probably by the producers of the film. It was broadcast on the same network that produced the famous program *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction . . . ?*, which became one of the most famous hoaxes in television history—although some UFO fans still believe that the footage is real. Cynically, the show was later recycled by the same network in a program called *The World's Greatest Hoaxes: Secrets Finally Revealed*.

THE MOUNTAIN MAN

If Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first humans to scale Mount Everest, most mountaineers regard Reinhold Messner as the greatest climber ever. Born in the South Tyrol region of the Italian Alps in 1944, Messner started his career making record-breaking climbs in the Alps and the Andes in the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1978, Messner and his climbing partner Peter Habeler became the first and so far the only humans to have reached the summit of Mount Everest without bottled oxygen, and two years later he scaled it again, not only without carrying oxygen but climbing alone. He is the only person to have climbed all fourteen of the “eight-thousanders,” the highest peaks in the world, which are more than 8,000 meters (26,000 feet) above sea level (all in the Himalayas). He and Arved Fuchs were also the first people to have crossed Antarctica on foot. He has made many sacrifices for these achievements, losing several toes to frostbite and suffering numerous other injuries.

He is famous for these many incredible climbs, but Messner had another interest as well: the Yeti. As he described one night in 1986, while traveling alone in a deep, forested valley in the Himalayan foothills:

Making my way through some ash-colored juniper bushes, I suddenly heard an eerie sound—a whistling noise, similar to the warning call mountain goats make. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the outline of an upright figure dart between the trees to the edge of the clearing, where low-growing thickets covered the steep slope. The figure hurried on, silent and hunched forward, disappearing behind a tree only to reappear again against the moonlight. It stopped for a moment and turned to look at me. Again I heard the whistle, more of an angry hiss, and for a heartbeat I saw eyes and teeth. The creature towered menacingly, its face a gray shadow, its body a black outline. Covered with hair, it stood upright on two short legs and had powerful arms that hung down almost to its knees. I guessed it to be

over seven feet tall. Its body looked much heavier than that of a man of that size, but it moved with such agility and power toward the edge of the escarpment that I was both startled and relieved. Mostly I was stunned. No human would have been able to run like that in the middle of the night. It stopped again beyond the trees by the low-growing thickets, as if to catch its breath, and stood motionless in the moonlit night without looking back. I was too mesmerized to take my binoculars out of my backpack.

The longer I stared at it, the more the figure seemed to change shape. . . . A heavy stench hung in the air, and the creature's receding calls resounded within me. I heard it plunge into the thicket, saw it rush up the slope on all fours, higher and higher, deeper into the night and into the mountains, until it disappeared and all was still again.¹³⁵

Messner fled in terror, scrambling along the rocky slopes until he reached a village and safety.

For the next ten years, he trekked around the Himalayas—sneaking into and out of occupied Tibet and hiding from Chinese patrols, breaking out of Chinese jails, hiking up and down one mountain range after another—in search of more evidence. He was one of the first Westerners to visit Bhutan after the king ended the country's self-imposed isolation. For all his searching, Messner found a few tracks, but they were inconclusive. He visited the famous Pangboche monastery, whose "Yeti scalp" turned out to be a serow pelt. At a Bhutanese monastery, Messner viewed a relic alleged to be the mummified pelt, head, hands, and feet of a "Yeti cub," but it was also a fabricated taxidermic fake (what sideshow operators would call a "gaffed" creature):

The hands and legs really did seem human, like those of a child of eight or nine. It was obvious they were shaped with little sticks, leather, cloth, and thread—in other words, re-created. They were hanging on a thin hide that looked as if it might have been that of a monkey. The head was clearly handcrafted, its face a mask, and the hide stretched over it probably that of an animal. I couldn't tell if what was beneath it was wood or bone. . . . The Gangtey Gompa relic was nothing more than a doll used to cast out spirits—or to keep the legend of the yeti alive.¹³⁶

As had Ernst Schäfer in the 1930s, Messner accompanied Tibetans to find the lairs of the *chemo* (Yeti), only to discover bear dens.¹³⁷ In 1997, he visited the Sosar Gompa monastery in Kham, where two animals hung over the entrance: a stuffed yak and a stuffed *chemo*, which turned out to be a Himalayan

brown bear.¹³⁸ As he spoke with more and more Nepalese and Tibetans, he began to realize that the Yeti is a mythical composite of several animals, including not only an ape-like creature but also the Himalayan brown bear.

While trekking near the peaks of the Nanga Partains in 1997, Messner saw several *chemos* (or *dremos*, in the local dialect):

One afternoon, after a long trek, we encountered another *dremo*. He fled when he saw us, but then seemed to stop and rest in a hollow. I approached the spot from behind some ridges so that he wouldn't pick up my scent. Rozi Ali [his trekking guide] followed me. When I began to climb down to where the animal was sleeping in the grass, Rozi Ali tried to stop me. I broke free of his grasp and came within twenty yards of the animal, where I took some good pictures. Rozi Ali, crouching some way back, begged me to make a run for it. He was sweating with fear.

The animal woke up and looked at me in the way a startled child would a stranger. It was a young brown bear. It would only turn into a *dremo*, *chemo*, or yeti later, when the local people were providing their version of the encounter. . . . We saw only one more *dremo* during our trip to Kashmir. It was running away on two legs. From a distance it looked uncannily like a wild man [but it was also a brown bear].¹³⁹

In an interview, Messner was asked if locals had actually shown him the animal that they called a Yeti:

In the eastern part of Tibet they said to me, "This yeti is stealing women, he's killing yaks, and sometimes in the wintertime he comes and steals a goat. And he is a little bit like we are, and when he is whistling we have to run away"—exactly the stories the Sherpas tell about the yeti. Finally they brought me to a place. They said, "There is one! You see it?" And it was a Tibetan bear. And they said, "This is exactly what is stealing the women and killing the yaks."¹⁴⁰

After a full decade of trekking into and out of Tibet and Nepal, Bhutan and Kashmir, and examining every bit of evidence, one of the best mountain men who ever lived concluded that "the pieces fit":

Yeti is a collective term for all the monsters of the Himalayas, real or imagined. It is the abominable snowman, that Western fantasy, as well as the *chemo* and *dremo*. My perspective was no longer Western. I did not believe yetis were relics of prehistoric anthropoid species that had managed to survive undetected. The yeti was a living creature, not a figment of the imagination, that corresponded to the brown bear. . . . After all, in an ancient Tibetan dialect, *yeti* translates as "snow bear."

I hasten to add that this is an extraordinary animal—fearsome and preternaturally intelligent, as far as possible from the cuddly image people of the West sometimes have of bears.¹⁴¹

THE HUNT CONTINUES

Even though the accounts from Ernst Schäfer, Reinhold Messner, and others seem quite conclusive that the Yeti is a mythical animal based on the Himalayan brown bear, and all the “evidence” for the Yeti is inconclusive or points to the bear, not an ape-like creature, many believers refuse to give up the search. In 2007, Joshua Gates, the producer of the television series *Destination Truth*, mounted an expedition to the Himalayas. His team found 13-inch tracks in the snow¹⁴² and brought casts to a Bigfoot advocate, anthropologist Jeffrey Meldrum, who thought that the footprints had been made by a primate and resembled Bigfoot tracks. They also found some “Yeti hair,” which, when analyzed, once again appears to belong to a Himalayan ruminant such as the goral or serow. On July 25, 2008, hairs brought back from the Garo Hills in northeastern India by Yeti hunter Dipu Marak were analyzed, and they also turned out to be from a serow.¹⁴³

In 2008, the cryptozoology series *MonsterQuest* mounted its own expedition to the Himalayas.¹⁴⁴ The resulting episode features primatologist Ian Redmond and other Yeti advocates; includes cameo interviews with the elderly Peter Byrne, telling the story of the expeditions funded and led by Tom Slick, as well as with Messner and other bear experts who affirm the “bear origins” story; and a short segment on Schäfer and the Nazi connection. The presentation is like that of most other episodes of *MonsterQuest*: lots of spooky music and moody, dark shots; computer-graphic simulations of encounters; plenty of footage of the scenery and of the “Yeti hunters” huffing and puffing their way through the Himalayas (as their Sherpas barely sweat)—and nothing in the way of hard evidence. The tracks are inconclusive, and one “trackway” was made by a rolling snowball. The crew spends an inordinate amount of time trying to rig up a camera on a weather balloon, but finds nothing. The camera traps on the “Yeti trail” capture only ordinary wildlife. The hair samples, sent to a lab for analysis, once again are from a serow or goral. The hunters examine a carcass that vultures were scavenging, and Redmond even eats some of the rotten meat, all to speculate that this kind of food *might*

sustain a Yeti. Programs like *Destination Truth* and *MonsterQuest* get high ratings on cable television and sustain the beliefs of viewers who want the mystery of unknown monsters, such as the Yeti, in their lives. But they offer no actual evidence—only much speculation—thus reinforcing the conviction that behind the false leads and inconclusive bits of evidence for the Yeti are only brown bears, rolling snowballs, and the tendency of non-Western peoples to conflate legend with reality in a way that Westerners cannot fathom and usually misunderstand.

Indeed, the most conclusive proof of the true meaning of the Yeti, as documented by Reinhold Messner and others, is that many of the peoples of the Himalayas *know* and *admit* that the Yeti is a myth, built on the foundation of the terrors of the Himalayan brown bear and then transmuted into their religious symbol. Messner describes a visit with the Dalai Lama, who asks him this very question:

“Do you think that the migio, chemong [another name for the brown bear], and yeti might well be the same thing?” [asked the Dalai Lama].

“I not only think so, I am completely convinced that they are,” I said. Then I put my finger to my lips, as did the Dalai Lama, as if acknowledging that this must remain our secret.¹⁴⁵

- 1 Simon Welfare and John Fairley, *Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World* (New York: A&W Visual Library, 1980), 14.
- 2 Brian Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch: Crackpots, Eggheads, and Cryptozoology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 31.
- 3 Reinhold Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti: Confronting the Himalayas' Deepest Mystery* (New York: Pan, 1998), viii.
- 4 Colonel [Charles K.], Howard-Bury, "The Attempt on Everest," *Times* (London), October 21, 1921, 11.
- 5 C. K. Howard-Bury, *Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1922), 141.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Howard-Bury, "Attempt on Everest."
- 8 Howard-Bury, *Mount Everest*, 141.
- 9 Henry Newman, "On Everest: The 'Wild Men' Myth," *Leader* (Allahabad, India), November 6, 1921, 9.
- 10 Henry Newman, "The 'Abominable Snowmen'" [letter to the editor], *Times*, July 29, 1937, 15.
- 11 For useful introductions to the varied vocabulary of the Yeti, see, for example, Edmund Hillary and Desmond Doig, *High in the Thin Cold Air* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962) 32; and Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, viii.
- 12 William L. Straus Jr., "Abominable Snowman," *Science* 123 (1956): 1024-1025. Pranavananda published his interpretation in many venues; see, for example, Swami Pranavananda, "Abominable Stories About the Snowman," *Times of India* (Mumbai [Bombay]), May 22, 1955, 5. Srmat Swami Pranavananda is identified as "Sreemat Swami Pranavananda, an Indian religious notable," in "The 'Abominable Snowman' Unmasked: The Red Bear Believed Guilty of a Himalayan Fraud," *Times*, July 3, 1956, 7.
- 13 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 32.
- 14 B. H. Hodgson, "On the Mammalia of Nepal," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1 (1832): 339n.
- 15 John Napier, *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality* (New York: Dutton, 1973), 36.
- 16 Ivan T. Sanderson, *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Comes to Life* (New York: Pyramid, 1968), 43-45. Sanderson first offered a page of introductory fluff, waxing nostalgic about nineteenth-century British officer-explorers and their "wealth of wisdom" and "extraordinarily keen interest in the world about them," and then gave a wildly inaccurate,

paraphrased version of Laurence Waddell's tale—both embellishing it with made-up details not found in the original (“tracks made by some creature walking on two legs and two bare feet . . . brought whoops of admiration from the Major's mountain-born porters”) and omitting the key detail: *Waddell had assessed the tracks as coming from a bear*. The most charitable view would be that Sanderson was bluffing about his citation rather than deliberately misrepresenting the evidence, and he simply had not read the original. (He complained on the following page about the “time-consuming and frustrating” difficulty of trying to track down primary sources that are “either lost in some archive or truly lost forever.”) Bernard Heuvelmans at least quoted Waddell, but similarly omitted the key fact that Waddell had considered these footprints to be those of a bear and blamed “an atmosphere of superstition” for the claims of hairy wild men (*On the Track of Unknown Animals*, trans. Richard Garnett [New York: Hill and Wang, 1959], 128).

- 17 L. A. Waddell, *Among the Himalayas* (1899; rept., Delhi: Pilgrims Book House, 1998), 223–224.
- 18 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 36–37.
- 19 William Woodville Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas: Notes of a Journey Through China, Mongolia and Tibet* (New York: Century, 1891), 150–151.
- 20 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 35.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 22 Quoted in *ibid.*, 39–40
- 23 Joe Nickell, *Tracking the Man-Beasts: Sasquatch, Vampires, Zombies, and More* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2011), 56.
- 24 Consider the case of Man Bahadur, a thirty-five-year-old Nepalese pilgrim who spent an extended period with Edmund Hillary's high-altitude medicine team (1960/1961). As described by team member and doctor Michael Ward, Bahadur

stayed for 14 days at 15,300 ft and above, and throughout this period wore neither shoes nor gloves, and walked in the snow and on rocks in bare feet without any evidence of frostbite. He wore minimal clothing and had no sleeping bag or protective equipment other than a woollen coat. He was continuously monitored whilst spending four days without shelter between 16,500 ft and 17,500 ft, with night temperatures between -13°C [8.6°F] and -15°C [5°F], and day temperatures below freezing. Eventually he developed deep cracks in the skin of his toes, which became infected, and he returned to lower levels for this reason. Had any European members of the party followed this regime they would undoubtedly have become severely frostbitten and hypothermic. (“The Yeti Footprints: Myth and Reality,” *Alpine Journal* [1999]: 86)

For photographs of Bahadur and his feet, see “The Highest Livers,” *Life*, May 12, 1961, 92.

- 25 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 61.
- 26 Ernst Schäfer, *Dach der Erde: Durch das Wunderland Hochtibet Tibetexpedition 1934/1936* (*Roof of the World: Through the Wonderland of Upper Tibet, Tibet Expedition, 1934–1936*) (Berlin: Parey, 1938).
- 27 Christopher Hale, *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race* (Edison, N.J.: Castle Books, 2006), 53.

- 28 Ibid., 180.
- 29 Schäfer, *Dach der Erde*, 81–87 (translated by Hans-Dieter Sues).
- 30 Quoted in Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, 108.
- 31 Quoted in *ibid.*
- 32 “A Himalayan ‘Snowman’? Alleged Signs. Strange Imprints at 16,000 Ft.,” *Times of India*, December 9, 1936, 11.
- 33 F. S. Smythe, “Abominable Snowman. Pursuit in the Himalayas,” *Times*, November 10, 1937, 15–16.
- 34 Balu [H. W. Tilman], “Are the ‘Snowmen’ Bears?” *Times*, November 13, 1937, 13. Tilman’s climbing partner Eric Shipton explained that same year that in 1936 he had been “amused to find that these men [Mana porters] had nicknamed Tilman ‘Balu Sahib’ (Balu meaning a bear) owing to the speed with which he moves over steep, forested ground” (“Survey Work in the Nanda Devi Region,” *Himalayan Journal* 9 [1937], <http://www.himalayanclub.org/journal/survey-work-in-the-nanda-devi-region/> (accessed May 17, 2012). Frank Smythe pretty clearly knew that Tilman was Balu, as evidenced in “Mr Smythe’s Reply,” *Times*, November 16, 1937, 17. Tilman rather theatrically denied that he was Balu: “Mr Smythe’s facility for putting two and two together and making five is seen . . . in his identification of Balu with Your obedient servant, H. W. Tilman” (“Abominable Snowman” [letter to the editor], *Times*, December 1, 1937, 12). Despite this denial, Tilman made Balu’s argument the central plank in his defense of the Yeti in 1938. See H. W. Tilman, “Notes on the Abominable Snowman,” in *Men and Mountain-eeing: An Anthology of Writings by Climbers*, ed. Showell Styles (New York: White, 1968), 105 (excerpted from *Mount Everest, 1938* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948]).
- 35 Tilman, “Abominable Snowman,” 12.
- 36 Ralph Izzard, *The Abominable Snowman Adventure* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), 14.
- 37 Tilman, “Notes on the Abominable Snowman,” 105.
- 38 Izzard, *Abominable Snowman Adventure*, 44.
- 39 Hale, *Himmler’s Crusade*, 58.
- 40 Quoted in *ibid.*, 128.
- 41 Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, 107–122.
- 42 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 46–47.
- 43 Sanderson, *Abominable Snowmen*, 269.
- 44 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 47.
- 45 Edmund Hillary, “Abominable—and Improbable?” *New York Times Magazine*, January 24, 1960, 13; Ward, “Yeti Footprints,” 81.
- 46 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 141.
- 47 Eric Shipton, “A Mystery of Everest: Footprints of the ‘Abominable Snowman,’” *Times*, December 6, 1951, 5.
- 48 Quoted in “*Gigantopithecus*: The Jury-Rigged Giant Bigfoot,” Pacific Northwest and Siberia Expedition, http://www.bermuda-triangle.org/html/gigantopithecus--_the_jury-rig.html (accessed October 22, 2011).

- 49 Peter Gillman, "The Most Abominable Hoaxer?" *Sunday Times Magazine* (London), December 10, 1989, 39–44, and "The Yeti Footprints," *Alpine Journal* (2001): 143–151.
- 50 The photograph appears as an unnumbered figure, whose caption reads, "The abominable snowman's trail, photographed by Eric Shipton in 1951 with (inset) a single footprint . . .," in Heuvelmans, *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, facing 136.
- 51 Shipton passed away on March 28, 1977, as noted in "Obituary: Mr. Eric Shipton: Mountaineer, Explorer and Writer," *Times*, March 30, 1977, 19; Gillman reported that Sherpa San Tenzing was dead by 1989, in "Most Abominable Hoaxer?" 44; and Ward died in 2005, as recorded in Jim Perrin, "Obituary: Michael Ward," *Guardian*, October 27, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2005/oct/27/guardianobituarieverest> (accessed May 21, 2012.) In 1999, Ward wrote his rebuttal to Gillman: "Yeti Footprints," 81–83.
- 52 Ward, "Yeti Footprints," 81–83.
- 53 Quoted in Gillman, "Most Abominable Hoaxer?" 44.
- 54 See, for example, "The Abominable Snowmen," *New York Times*, December 27, 1951, 18; "Abominable Himalayan," *Life*, December 1951, 88; Wladimir Tschernetzky, "A Reconstruction of the Foot of the 'Abominable Snowman,'" *Nature* 186, no. 4723 (1960): 496–497.
- 55 Ward, "Yeti Footprints," 83.
- 56 Gillman, "Yeti Footprints," 145.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 58 Ward, "Yeti Footprints," 85.
- 59 Gillman, "Yeti Footprints," 150.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 149–150.
- 61 Gillman, "Most Abominable Hoaxer?" 42.
- 62 Gillman, "Yeti Footprints," 145.
- 63 Quoted in *ibid.*, 150.
- 64 Edouard Wyss-Dunant, "The Himalayan Footprints: New Traces Seen by Swiss Expedition," *Times*, June 6, 1952, 5.
- 65 Edouard Wyss-Dunant, "The Yeti: Biped or Quadroped?" *The Mountain World*, 1960/61, ed. Malcolm Branes (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1961), 252–259.
- 66 "Abominable Snowman: Hairy Beast Seized Him, Says Porter," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), December 30, 1952, 11, second edition.
- 67 Joshua Blu Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 36.
- 68 "Everest Climbers Given Medal by Ike," *Joplin (Mo.) Globe*, February 12, 1954, 20, final edition.
- 69 "Now Seek Abominable Snowman Says Col. Hunt," *Daily Express* (London), June 16, 1953, 2.
- 70 Quoted in "Tenzing Saved His Life, Hillary Says in London," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), July 4, 1953, 8.
- 71 P. McL., "A Man of the Mountains," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 13, 1955, 28.
- 72 Richard Crichfield, "In the Land of the Abominable Snowman," *Sunday Herald Magazine* (Chicago), May 20, 1979, 10.

- 73 Izzard describes hiring “nearly 300 coolies” plus, as a result of a supply problem, “a second coolie team of 70 men to follow our main party” (*Abominable Snowman Adventure*, 95–96).
- 74 Quoted in *ibid.*, 108–109.
- 75 Charles Stonor, *The Sherpa and the Snowman* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1955), 118.
- 76 Izzard, *Abominable Snowman Adventure*.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 137–145.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 198–201.
- 79 Quoted in *ibid.*, 199.
- 80 Stonor, *Sherpa and the Snowman*, 38.
- 81 Quoted in Izzard, *Abominable Snowman Adventure*, 103.
- 82 Stonor, *Sherpa and the Snowman*, 78.
- 83 “‘Abominable Snowman’ in Tibetan Zoo,” *Times of India*, November 15, 1953, 1.
- 84 Stonor, *Sherpa and the Snowman*, 30.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 64–65.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 204–205.
- 87 Loren Coleman, *Tom Slick: True Life Encounters in Cryptozoology* (Fresno, Calif.: Craven Street Books, 2002), 74, 36–37, 186, 45.
- 88 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 37–40.
- 89 Loren Coleman, *Tom Slick and the Search for the Yeti* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 178–203.
- 90 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 37–41.
- 91 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 42. Tom Slick was reported to have left Kathmandu for the mountains around March 14, and to have returned to Kathmandu on April 19. See “Texan to Hunt Asian ‘Snowman,’” *Lawton (Okla.) Constitution*, March 14, 1957, 13; “Slick About Convinced Giant ‘Snowman’ Exists,” *Miami (Okla.) Daily News Herald*, April 19, 1957, 9; and “Texan Finds Footprints of ‘Snowman,’” *Pacific Stars and Stripes* (Tokyo), April 20, 1957, 5. However, Byrne later wrote that they “spent three months in the mountains” during the 1957 expedition (*The Search for Bigfoot: Monster, Myth or Man?* [Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1975], 117).
- 92 “Slick About Convinced Giant ‘Snowman’ Exists,” 9. Byrne, however, mentions only two sets of tracks: “I found one set of footprints, in the Chhoyang Khola at 10,000 feet, and Tom [Slick], working with a separate party in another area, found a second set” (*Search for Bigfoot*, 117).
- 93 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 42–43.
- 94 Tom Slick, “Abominable Snowman—No Longer a Legend,” *Daily Boston Globe*, May 18, 1958, B22.
- 95 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 43.
- 96 Peter Byrne, “Hope to Take Him Alive with Drug-Bullet Gun,” *Daily Boston Globe*, May 19, 1958, 8.
- 97 Peter Byrne, “We Dress Up as Natives to Fool Wary Animals,” *Daily Boston Globe*, May 20, 1958, 10.
- 98 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 43–45. However, Byrne reports that the end date is less clear: “[O]ne by one, the various members had to leave and before four months had passed all, with the

- exception of my brother and I, had departed. We stayed on for another five months, making nine months in all" (*Search for Bigfoot*, 118).
- 99 "Snowman Reported Seen Eating Himalayan Frogs," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1958, A3.
- 100 "Americans Find Cave of Abominable Snowman," *Daily Boston Globe*, April 30, 1958, 9.
- 101 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 45.
- 102 Ibid., 49.
- 103 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 43.
- 104 "Tracing the Origins of a 'Yeti's Finger,'" December 27, 2011, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-16264752> (accessed May 19, 2012).
- 105 Loren Coleman, "Jimmy Stewart and the Yeti," *The Anomalist*, <http://www.anomalist.com/milestones/stewart.html> (accessed October 22, 2011); Byrne, *Search for Bigfoot*, 120.
- 106 "Abominable Snowman" [season 3, episode 59], *MonsterQuest*, History Channel, October 25, 2009, "MonsterQuest: Abominable Snowman, Pt. 4," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syLd4zx1BWU&feature=related> (accessed October 22, 2011).
- 107 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 47.
- 108 Quoted in "Yeti Finger Mystery Solved by Edinburgh Scientists," December 27, 2011, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-16316397> (accessed May 19, 2012).
- 109 Tom Slick, "Expedition a Success, Proves Yeti Exists," *Daily Boston Globe*, July 26, 1958, 4.
- 110 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 46.
- 111 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 46–47.
- 112 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 52.
- 113 Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 112.
- 114 For a discussion of the scientific team, see Michael Ward, "Himalayan Scientific Expedition, 1960–61," *Alpine Journal* (1961): 343. The team's 150 porters are noted in Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 112.
- 115 Edmund Hillary and Desmond Doig, *High in the Thin Cold Air* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962) 130–131.
- 116 Ibid., 82–83.
- 117 Ibid., 103.
- 118 Ibid., 131.
- 119 Ibid., 131–132.
- 120 Ibid., 88.
- 121 The loan agreement for the scalp specified that "Sir Edmund Hillary and the members of the expedition put into effect an appeal to the sponsors of the expedition, mountaineering societies, and the general public to establish and support a school for the benefit of the people of Khunde and Khumjung villages." With help from the World Book Encyclopedia, the Indian Aluminum Company, and the International Red Cross, and labor from Hillary and his friends from the expedition and local village, the school was soon made a reality. See Hillary and Doig, *High in the Thin Cold Air*, 88. That school was only the beginning. "At the request of Sherpa residents," Hillary reflected in 2003, "we helped establish 27 schools, two hospitals, and a dozen medical clinics—plus quite a few

- bridges over wild rivers. We constructed several airfields and rebuilt Buddhist monasteries and cultural centers. We planted a million seedlings in Sagarmatha National Park to replace the vast number of trees destroyed for firewood and used to build the small hotels that came with the growth of tourism" ("My Story," *National Geographic*, May 2003, 40).
- 122 Napier, *Bigfoot*, 59.
- 123 Ibid., 61–62.
- 124 Ibid., pl. 3.
- 125 Quoted in "British Climber Says He Saw Abominable Snowman," *Stars and Stripes* (Darmstadt), June 13, 1970, 4.
- 126 Quoted in "Names and Faces," *Boston Globe*, June 8, 1970, 2.
- 127 Zhou Guoxing, "The Status of the Wildman Research in China," Bigfoot Encounters, <http://www.bigfootencounters.com/biology/zhou.htm> (accessed May 19, 2012).
- 128 "Yeti Is Just a Plain, Old Brown Bear, Says Chinese Expert," World Tibet Network News, January 13, 1998, http://www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/wtn/archive/old?y=1998&m=1&p=13_4 (accessed May 19, 2012).
- 129 Quoted in "Dogs from U.S. Will Hunt the Yeti in Nepal: Search for Snowman Opens This Month," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 4, 1958, A8.
- 130 Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch*, 144–147.
- 131 Ibid., 151–156.
- 132 Anthony B. Wooldridge, "First Photos of the Yeti: An Encounter in North India," *Cryptozoology* 5 (1986): 63–76, and "An Encounter in Northern India," Bigfoot Encounters, <http://www.bigfootencounters.com/articles/wooldridge.htm> (accessed October 22, 2011).
- 133 Quoted in Michael Dennett, "Abominable Snowman Photo Comes to Rocky End," *Skeptical Inquirer* 13, no. 2 (1989): 118–119; Jerome Clark, *Unexplained! Strange Sightings, Incredible Occurrences, and Puzzling Physical Phenomena* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Visible Ink Press, 1999), 599–600.
- 134 "The Snow Walker Film Footage," Bigfoot Encounters, <http://www.bigfootencounters.com/films/snowwalker.htm> (accessed October 22, 2011).
- 135 Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, 7–8.
- 136 Ibid., 98–100.
- 137 Ibid., 129–130, 142.
- 138 Ibid., 146.
- 139 Ibid., 154, 156.
- 140 Ted Chamberlain, "Reinhold Messner: Climbing Legend, Yeti Hunter," National Geographic Adventure, http://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/0005/q_n_a.html (accessed October 22, 2011).
- 141 Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, 156.
- 142 Charles Haviland, "'Yeti Prints' Found Near Everest," December 1, 2007, BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7122705.stm (accessed October 22, 2011).
- 143 Alastair Lawson, "'Yeti Hairs' Belong to a Goat," October 13, 2008, BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7666900.stm (accessed October 22, 2011).

144 “Abominable Snowman” [season 3, episode 59], *MonsterQuest*, History Channel, October 25, 2009, “MonsterQuest: Abominable Snowman, Pt. 1,” YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYwO_k7vDmg (accessed October 22, 2011).

145 Messner, *My Quest for the Yeti*, 157.